The Bible in Arab Christianity

Edited by David Thomas

BRILL

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The History of Christian-Muslim Relations

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Photo front cover: f.14r of Codex Sinai Arabic NF 8, an early copy of the Gospels in Arabic, possibly eighth century, written on re-used parchment. This composite folio contains the text of Matthew 7:21-8:4, with Greek underwriting visible in the two right-hand portions.
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Christians and Muslims have been involved in exchanges over matters of faith and morality since the founding of Islam. Attitudes between the faiths today are deeply coloured by the legacy of past encounters, and often preserve centuries-old negative views.
The History of Christian-Muslim Relations, Texts and Studies presents the surviving record of past encounters in authoritative, fully introduced text editions and annotated translations, and also monograph and collected studies. It illustrates the development in mutual perceptions as these are contained in surviving Christian and Muslim writings, and makes available the arguments and rhetorical strategies that, for good or for ill, have left their mark on attitudes today. The series casts light on a history marked by intellectual creativity and occasional breakthroughs in communication, although, on the whole beset by misunderstanding and misrepresentation. By making this history better known, the series seeks to contribute to improved recognition between Christians and Muslims in the future.

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INTRODUCTION

The spectacular growth of culture that followed the Muslim seizure of former Byzantine and Sasanian territories in the seventh and eighth centuries was as deeply indebted to the existing cultures within which it took place as to its own native resources. And as Muslims developed distinctive forms of thinking, articulation of faith and systematization of belief, they did so in debate with Christians and others around them. Thus, the first surviving Muslim religious literature is replete with analyses of the beliefs of Christians, Jews and dualists as attempts to demonstrate what is deficient or wrong in them, and later works contain refutations of these beliefs alongside expositions of Muslim beliefs themselves. Muslim authors were intent on showing that any alternatives to the strict monotheism which they themselves followed were incoherent and logically unviable, with the obvious inference that any form that differed from Islam could not be sustained.

In this theological endeavour, which can be witnessed in Muslim writings from the earliest times through the tenth and eleventh centuries and later, Muslims were, of course, giving systematic form to suggestions in the Qur'an that religious communities which preceded them had neglected and mishandled the truth revealed to them and lapsed into error and confusion. A basic part of this accusation was that they had not only departed from the revealed scriptures they had been granted through the divinely appointed messengers sent to them, but had also lost those scriptures themselves in their pristine form. Thus, an important part of Muslim polemical literature was occupied with showing that the scriptural texts of Christians and others were no longer true to their revealed antecedents. Over a relatively short period of time it became the accepted view that these books were corrupt, often in the case of Christianity because they were reconstructions of lost originals into which alien doctrines from exotic places had been introduced, and so the teachings derived from them were bound to be wrong. Muslim polemicists tended to accept this as a norm and search for reasons to support it, and none challenged its basic premises.

Christians for their part came under increasingly powerful influence in the early Islamic centuries to relate to, and to some extent

participate in, the distinctive cultural developments they experienced around them. As communities within the *Ahl al-dhimma* they were, of course, required to conform. But as bearers of their own traditions of learning and belief, they often at first looked down on the people who ruled them as inferior and religiously wrong. But their own beliefs required them to make sense of the changes that took place as rule by Christians (no matter how harsh) gave place to rule by their opposites. And like it or not, it became increasingly necessary to take seriously the language of their rulers and their ways of expressing their beliefs. Gradually, translations of Christian scripture were made in response to popular needs and the practical necessities of populations that employed Arabic in all areas of social intercourse. And expressions of doctrines were attempted in the idiom of Muslim theology, in part to make them accessible to Muslim interlocutors and in part to express beliefs in forms that were becoming natural for Christians who moved in Muslim theological circles and shared the same conceptuality and methods as others within them.

For such Christians it became and remained a pressing necessity to defend the integrity of the Bible and to show that it not only contained all the beliefs that Christians followed but also anticipated the events of history and particularly the challenge of Islam. Just as anti-Jewish apologists and polemicists had collected texts that showed incontrovertibly that their opponents were wrong, so anti-Muslim apologists and polemicists did the same, often adopting the same texts and even criticizing Muslims indirectly behind attacks on Jews.

As might be expected, the Bible was central in Christian-Muslim debates both as object and instrument. It provided a major source of Christian polemical and apologetic arguments, and it was also attacked and defended for its integrity and authenticity as a God-given word. The study of the Bible in Arab Christianity under early Islam is in great part the study of the experience of Arab Christians in this period and of their constant awareness of having to defend the origins and intellectual probity of their beliefs against the challenges of the vigorous new faith that sought to overthrow them.

The nineteen papers in this collection seek in many different ways to portray the continuing centrality of the Bible in the eastern Churches and in their relations with Islam. The first is an attempt by Hikmat Kachouh to throw light on the basic question of Arabic translations of the Bible. By sampling variant translations of two

test verses from the Gospel of John in manuscripts of the continuous Arabic text of the Gospels he is able to suggest a preliminary categorization into families and to give linguistic and ideological reasons for the different renderings. This is a first step towards providing a means of dating these translations.

Samir Arbache also broaches the issue of the earliest Arabic translations of scripture and liturgical texts, though from a wider historical point of view. From a consideration of a range of evidence he finds nothing that points incontrovertibly to anything pre-Islamic or early, and suggests that instead it was only after the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik had the Arabic alphabet fixed that written versions of biblical and liturgical texts began to appear, and incidentally that the Qurʾan was finally set down.

In his study of four apparently anti-Jewish texts from the latter seventh century, Sean O'Sullivan discerns implicit and oblique references to Islam that suggest many of the elements of the classical form of the faith were in place by this time. These very early texts show that even before 700 Christians were acutely aware of the religion under whose laws they lived.

Harald Suermann examines the use of scriptural references in a group of Christian texts whose authors are aware of Islam that can also be dated to the Umayyad period. He tabulates the verses they use and discusses the ways in which they use them. He concludes that the preferences for different books of the Bible they show derive from their different perceptions of the significance of the new Muslim rule.

Mark Swanson centres his examination on one Melkite text that may also come from the Umayyad period, known as *On the Triune Nature of God*, and places this against other Melkite literature. He shows that the series of biblical quotations, *testimonia*, which they each incorporate at various points are not used simply as proof texts in support of the validity of Christianity for Muslim consumption, but are rather intended for Christians in order to remind them of the truths of their faith at a time when their experience pointed to the contrary.

Emmanouela Grypeou makes the first of two studies of the *Apocalypse of Peter*, which, she argues, is a re-writing of biblical history in a Muslim context. Although the work is difficult to date accurately, it focuses on the scriptural origins and character of the Christian community in such a way that believers who are beset with uncer-

tainties stirred up by the appearance of Islam might be reassured that their own faith is the embodiment of God's eternal plan.

Barbara Roggema's study of another part of the same text brings out in a complementary way the author's attempt to explain the appearance of Islam and to predict its end by exposing its internal weaknesses. This analysis would have encouraged the original Christian readers, who would also have been deterred from abandoning their faith by the warnings that are clearly present in the work.

David Bertaina takes up the issue of Christian-Muslim polemic head on. He discusses three early collections of *testimonia* to show how their authors developed and re-applied a tradition that derived from much earlier times for use in the new context. A novel turn in this tradition was their use of Qurʾan verses in the same way as Bible verses to support their beliefs and doctrines.

The Muslim attitude towards the Bible in its developed form is explored by David Thomas, who examines a series of theological refutations of Christian doctrines from the ninth and later centuries. These have little to say about the status of Christian scripture, because their main concerns lie elsewhere, though some use individual verses against Christians, and others acknowledge in passing the received view that it has been corrupted. One text by al-Juwaynī does treat the status of the Bible as a central concern, though in its close analysis it exhibits the same general attitude as other Muslim writings, that Christian scripture was corrupt and thus an inadequate basis for doctrine.

Gabriel Said Reynolds writes on the exegetical tradition of early Islam, and shows how the commentators' rejection of assistance from biblical parallels faced them with considerable challenges. Taking the incident of the angelic visitation to Abraham and Sarah in Q 11.69-72, he explains how Sarah's laughter is interpreted in diverse ways in the Islamic tradition. While the Qurʾan itself appears to preserve a memory of the Christian linking of the annunciation to Sarah with the later annunciation to Mary, the Muslim commentators, who restricted themselves to the Qurʾan alone without the help of the Christian tradition of exegesis, did not make this link and began a new tradition of interpreting this incident.

Coming to the discussion of the familiar Islamic accusation that revealed scriptures before the Qurʾan were corrupted, Gordon Nickel centres his discussion on the eighth century Muslim commentator Muqātil Ibn Sulaymān's interpretations of the verses in the Qurʾan

that refer to People of the Book changing the text of scripture, or 'tampering'. He finds that Muqātil gives a host of explanations for what was done, but while he accuses the Jews of misinterpretation in numerous forms he significantly does not say they changed the actual text itself.

Clare Wilde investigates the intriguing phenomenon of some Christians in early Abbasid times including the Qur'an among the books of God. She argues that they did this very much on their own terms, because they were always sure to stress the human element in the compilation of the qur'anic text. She links this practice with contemporary debates among Mu'tazilīs about the createdness of the Qur'an, and suggests that such Christian comments may shed light on these as well as on Christian-Muslim encounters at this time.

Mark Beaumont examines ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī's response to Muslim accusations of corruption of the Bible. In one of his two surviving works, this ninth century Nestorian confidently argues that after the Gospels appeared in the public domain and became widespread it was practically impossible for corruption to be perpetrated. And in the other, he suggests six principles by which a purported scripture can be exposed as inauthentic, and demonstrates that none of these applies to the Gospels. His spirited defence shows that he was primarily aware of the accusation that corruption took the form of textual alteration rather than misinterpretation.

A contemporary of ʿAmmār, the Jacobite Ḥabīb Ibn Khidma Abū Rā'iṭa, is the subject of Sandra Keating's study. She shows how this scholar employs biblical texts, both providing for Christians translations of verses which they might find useful in debate, and re-deploying traditional proof-texts in new ways in order to prove to Muslims that Christianity is logically coherent and based on sound scripture. He exhibits a confidence in his faith that is similar to the Nestorian's, and a comparable originality in his use of scripture in this new interfaith context.

Maha El-Kaisy Friemuth confronts the problem of the authorship of the *Radd al-jamīl li-ilāhiyyat ʿĪsā bi-ṣarīḥ al-Injīl*, which has traditionally been attributed to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. This has been contested in recent years, though an examination of the manuscripts in which it is transmitted leads her to support the traditional ascription, while features of the *Radd* itself also show similarities with works by al-Ghazālī. The singular features which are undoubtedly to be found in the *Radd* are not enough to challenge this evidence, and

so Friemuth comes to the conclusion that the work can be included with al-Ghazālī's writings.

Lejla Demiri brings to light a Bible commentary by the fourteenth century Muslim author Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī. This was written in the period of the Crusades, with the intention of showing the deficiencies of Christianity and in response to Christian defamations of Islam. The commentary is unusual, both because it actually examines the contents of the Gospels and some other biblical books, and because it contains brief accounts of Christian doctrines.

Lucy-Anne Hunt studies the illustrated pages in two Coptic Gospel books from the thirteenth century. She suggests that the illustrations in one, which are similar to Byzantine parallels and were moved from an earlier copy, were inserted in this Arabic book in order to lend it seriousness and authority. And she traces the resemblances between the illustrations in the other, which are integral to the text, and Byzantine and Mamlūk equivalents, showing the transition from the influence of the one style to the other. The two versions mark moments in the establishing of an authoritative Arabic text of scripture, to which the accompaniment of familiar imagery lent a sense of continuity with the past.

The matter of transference between cultures is central to Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala's study of an Andalusian Arabic Pentateuch. While this translation might appear to the work of a Jewish or conceivably a Muslim hand, and has been taken as such, Monferrer-Sala discounts both possibilities and argues that it is, in fact, the work of a Nestorian Christian who may have migrated to the west. He supports this identification with a consideration of details in the work that show direct indebtedness to the Peshiṭṭā.

Finally, Natalia Smelova discusses biblical citations and allusions in a manuscript kept in St Petersburg. This contains Syriac translations of the *Theotokia*, short liturgical hymns to the Virgin Mary as Mother of God that form part of the service in the Eastern rites. She notes that the collection is Melkite in origin, and in the biblical allusions she sees reliance on the Peshiṭṭā translation, though also preference for direct transliteration from Greek.

The contributions were all originally given at the Fifth Mingana Symposium on Arab Christianity and Islam, held at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Selly Oak, Birmingham, on 14-17 September, 2005. Its theme was the same as the title of this volume, *The Bible in Arab Christianity*. It was a great pleasure to meet once again

for our discussions in what was originally the house that Alphonse Mingana (1878-1937) would have known, and to enjoy the welcome extended by the Quaker community there. And it is also a great pleasure to record our thanks to the Edward Cadbury Charitable Trust for the great financial help they gave in preparation for the Symposium and for this published volume. As before, Carol Bebawi was indispensable to all that led up to the meeting itself and has also assisted in checking these papers.

The name of Mingana will always be associated with the manuscript collection that bears his name in the ownership of the University of Birmingham. The committee that oversees its preservation and conservation entertained the participants in the course of the Symposium, and thereby continued a link that it is hoped will last for many years. The Sixth Mingana Symposium is planned for September 2009.

David Thomas

THE ARABIC VERSIONS OF THE GOSPELS: A CASE STUDY OF JOHN 1.1 AND 1.18

HIKMAT KACHOUH

Introduction

When it comes to Arabic manuscripts of the Bible, and particularly the Gospels, there is common agreement on the great number and diversity of manuscripts. In addition to this, the claim that Arabic Gospel manuscripts were translated from various languages—Greek, Syriac, Coptic, and Latin—and from different text-types, points to both the complexity and the time consuming nature of any study of them. This is especially true if we presuppose that some translators knew three languages and had access to more than one translation of the same text. All this may shed light on why there is not yet a thorough classification of the various Arabic manuscripts available and an in-depth study of the affinities and origin of these manuscripts.[1]

The Arabic manuscripts of the Gospels are found in six different forms: (a) lectionaries, which are particular passages of the Gospels to be read in divine services; (b) the Diatessaron, which is the fusion of the four Gospels into one harmonious narrative; (c) Gospel texts

[1] In the last two centuries many attempts have been made to advance the study of the Arabic manuscripts of the Bible. The most prominent scholars who have contributed in advancing the study of the *continuous texts of Gospel Arabic manuscripts written in an Arabic script* include: P. le Page Renouf; Paul de Lagarde; I. Gildemeisteri; I Guidi; F.C. Burkitt; L. Cheikho; K. Vollers and E. von Dobschütz; C.R. Gregory; D.B. Macdonald; K. Römer; H. Goussen; P.A. Varrari; A. Baumstark; B. Levin; C.E. Padwick; G. Graf; A. Vööbus; J. Blau; A.S. Atiya; K. Bailey; B.M. Metzger; A.G. Garland. Some of the most recent contributions are: S.H. Griffith, 'The Gospel in Arabic: an inquiry into its appearance in the first Abbasid century', *Oriens Christianus* 69, 1985, pp. 126-67; S.K. Samir, 'La version arabe des Évangiles d'al-Asad Ibn al-'Assāl', *Parole de l'Orient* 19, 1994, pp. 441-551; S. Arbache, 'Une ancienne version arabe des Évangiles: langue, texte et lexique', PhD thesis, Université Michel de Montaigne, Bordeaux, 1994; J. Valentin, 'Les évangéliaires arabes de la bibliothèque du Monastère Ste-Catherine (Mont Sinaï): essai de classification d'après l'étude d'un chapitre (*Matth.* 28). Traducteurs, réviseurs, types textuels', *Le Muséon* 116, 2003, pp. 415-77.

interspersed with commentaries and sometimes separated by the phrase قال المفسر, or the name of the Church Father from whom the explanation was taken; (d) Arabic manuscripts of the Bible written in Syriac script, called *Karshuni*; (e) Arabic manuscripts written in Hebrew script; (f) and finally Arabic manuscripts, written in Arabic script, which contain the *continuous* text of the Bible. It is with this last form that I am mainly concerned in my research and most specifically *the continuous texts of Gospel Arabic manuscripts written in an Arabic script.*

When test passages from about 200 manuscripts are collated, which can provisionally be grouped into about fourteen different families, the first impression we get is that the scribes were usually faithful to the originals from which they transcribed their new manuscripts. Generally speaking, they did not try to impose their own social, linguistic and theological background on the new texts. This claim, however, is not without exceptions, and only a full collation of the manuscripts can possibly vindicate such a hypothesis. The texts of John 1.1 and 1.18 are probably two of these exceptions. The diversity of readings these two verses demonstrate, even within members of one family, is remarkable. The purpose of this chapter is not only to present the variations found within the many manuscripts collated, but also to try to study the reasons behind this diversity. To do so we shall look at the *Vorlage*, or the languages behind the different Arabic translations, and then we will try to answer the question of why there is such a variety of readings.

Provisional groupings of John 1.1 and 18 (with an English translation)

Family I

Ms number	*Date*	*Arabic text*	*Translation*
Sinai, St Catherine ar. 75	c. 9th	f.79v في البدي لم يزل الكلمه والكلمه لم يزل عند الله والها لم يزل الكلمه	In the beginning the Word never ceased to be (*masc.*), and the Word never ceased to be (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and the Word never ceased to be (*masc.*) *Ilāh.*
		f.79v الاله لم يراه احدا قط الابن الوحيد الذي لم يزل في حضن الاب ذلك الذي اخبر	No one has ever seen *al-Lāh.* The only Son, who has never ceased to be in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of the Father, he is the one who informed (*akhbar*).

Sinai, St Catherine ar. 74	c. 9th	f.190r في البدي كانت الكلمه والكلمه لم تزل عند الله واله لم تزل الكلمه	In the beginning was (*fem.*) the Word and the Word never ceased to be (*fem.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh,* and the Word has never ceased to be *Ilāh.*
		f.191r الله لم يراه احد قط الابن الوحيد الازلى الذي في عب الاب ذاك اخبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh.* The only eternal Son, who is in the bosom (*ʿibb/ʿubb)* of the Father, this one has informed (*akhbar*).
Berlin Staatsbibl. orient. oct. 1108		f.154v في البدي لم تزل الكلمه والكلمه لم تزل عند الله واله لم تزل الكلمه	In the beginning the Word never ceased to be (*fem.*), and the Word never ceased to be (*fem.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh,* and the Word has never ceased to be (*fem.*) *Ilāh.*
		f.155r الله لم يراه احد قط الابن الوحيد الازلى الذي في عب الاب ذاك اخبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh.* The only eternal Son who is in the bosom (*ʿibb/ʿubb*) of the Father, this one informed (*akhbar*).
Sinai, St Catherine ar. 54	c. 10th	f.74v فى البدي لم تزل الكلمه والكلمه لم تزل عند الله واله لم تزل الكلمه	In the beginning the Word never ceased to be (*fem.*), and the Word never ceased to be (*fem.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh,* and the Word never ceased to be (*fem.*) *Ilāh.*
		f.75r الله لم يراه احد قط الابن الوحيد الازلى في عب الاب ذاك اخبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh.* The only eternal Son in the bosom (*ʿibb/ʿubb*) of the Father, this one informed (*akhbar*).
Sinai, St Catherine ar. 72	897	f.91v في البدي لم تزل الكلمه والكلمه لم تزل عند الله والله لم يزل الكلمه	In the beginning the Word never ceased to be (*fem.*), and the Word never ceased to be (*fem.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh,* and *Allāh* never ceased to be (*masc.*) the Word.
		f.92r الله لم يراه احد قط الابن الوحيد الازلى في حضن الاب ذاك اخبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh.* The only eternal Son in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of the Father, this one has informed (*akhbar*).

Family II

Ms number	*Date*	*Arabic text*	*Translation*
Jerusalem, Orthodox Patr. ar. 103	c.12/ 13th	f.172r في البدي كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله والاه لم يزل الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and *Ilāh* has never ceased to be (*masc.*) the Word.
		f.172v الله ما ابصره احد قط	No one has ever seen *(abṣarahu) Allāh*.
		f.173r الابن الوحيد الذي لم يزل في حضن الاب هو خبر بهذا	The only Son, who has never ceased to be (*masc.*) in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of the Father, he has told of this.
Sinai, St Catherine ar. 76	c. 13th	f.242v في البدى كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله والها لم يزل الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and the Word has never ceased to be (*masc.*) *Ilāh*.
		f.243v الله ما ابصره احد قط الابن الوحيد الذي لم يزل في حضن الاب هو خبر بهذا	No one has ever seen (*abṣarahu*) *Allāh*. The only Son, who has never ceased to be (*masc.*) in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of the Father, he has told of this.
Oxford Bodl. 299	1564	f.129v في البدي كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله والاه لم تزل الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and the Word has never ceased to be (*fem.*) *Ilāh*.
		f.129v الله ما ابصره احد قط الابن الوحيد الذي لم يزل في حضن الاب هو خبر بهذا	No one has ever seen (*abṣarahu*) *Allāh*. The only Son, who has never ceased to be (*masc.*) in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of the Father, he has told of this.

Family III

Ms number	*Date*	*Arabic text*	*Translation*
Vatican, Borgia ar. 71	c. 11th	f.143v في البدى كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله والكلمه لم يزل الاها	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and the Word has never ceased to be (*masc.*) *Ilāh*.
		f.144r الله ما ابصره احد قط الابن الوحيد الذي لم يزل في حضن الاب ذلك خبر بهذا	No one has ever seen (*abṣarahu*) *Allāh*. The only Son, who has never ceased to be (*masc.*) in the bosom *(ḥiḍn)* of the Father, that one told of this.
Leiden, Univ. Bibl., cod. 225 Scaliger	1179	f.429v في البدي كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله والكلمه لم تزل الاها	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and the Word has never ceased to be (*fem.*) *Ilāh*.
		f.431v الله ما بصره احد قط الابن الوحيد الذي لم يزل في حضن الاب ذاك خبر بهذا	No one has ever seen (*baṣarahu*) *Allāh*. The only Son, who has never ceased to be (*masc.*) in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of the Father, this one told of this.
Oxford Bodl. Marsh 575	1256	f.171v في البدي كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله والكلمه لم يزل الاها	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and the Word has never ceased to be (*masc.*) *Ilāh*.
		f.172r الله ما بصره احد قط الال لابن[2] الوحيد الذي لم يزل في حضن الاب ذلك خبر بهذا	No one has ever seen *(baṣarahu) Allāh*. The only *al-Il li-Ibn*, who has never ceased to be in the bosom *(ḥiḍn)* of the Father, that one has told of this.

[2] This is exactly how it is written but the letter ل is almost connected with لابن, as though the writer was writing الالاه but when he reached the middle of the word he changed to الابن.

Sinai, St Catherine ar. 89	1285	f.127r في البدي كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله والكلمه لم يُزل الهاً	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh,* and the Word has never ceased to be (*masc.*) *Ilāh.*
		f.127v الله ما بصره احد قط الابن الوحيد الذي لم يزل في حضن الاب ذلك خبر بهذا	No one has ever seen (*baṣarahu*) *Allāh.* The only Son, who has never ceased to be in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of the Father, that one has told of this.
Leiden, Univ. Bibl., cod. 1571	1331	f.152r في البدي كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله والكلمه لم تزل الاها.	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh,* and the Word has never ceased to be (*fem.*) *Ilāh.*
		f.152v الله ما بصره احد قط الابن الوحيد الذي لم يزل في حضن الاب ذاك خبر بهذا	No one has ever seen (*baṣarahu*) *Allāh.* The only Son, who has never ceased to be in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of the Father, this one told of this.
Sinai, St Catherine ar. 80	1479	f.128v في البدي كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله والكلمه لم تزل الاها	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh,* and the Word has never ceased to be (*fem.*) *Ilāh.*
		f.129r الله لم يراه احد قط الابن الوحيد الذي لم يزل في حضن الاب ذاك خبر بهذا	No one has ever seen *Allāh.* The only Son, who has never ceased to be in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of the Father, this one told of this.

Family IV

Ms number	*Date*	*Arabic text*	*Translation*
Berlin Staatsbibl. Do.162	1265	f.121v في الابتدا كان الكلمه والكلمه لم يزل عند الله والاها كان الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word has never ceased to be (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh* and the Word was (*masc.*) *Ilāh.*
		fol.122r الله لم يراه احد قط الابن الوحيد الذي لم يزل في حضن الاب هو خبّر بهذا	No one has ever seen *Allāh.* The only Son who has never ceased to be in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of the Father, he told of this.

Family V

Ms number	*Date*	*Arabic text*	*Translation*
London Brit. Library or. 2291	c. 12th	f.119r لان ليس انسان راى الله البته: الابن الوحيد الذي في حضن الاب: هو خبر بهذا[3]	For no human being has ever seen *Allāh.* The only Son who is in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of the Father, he has told of this.

Family VI

Ms number	*Date*	*Arabic text*	*Translation*
Vatican, Vat. syr. 269	1368	f.247r في الابتدا كان الكلمه وهو الكلمه كان ازلى عند الله فالله هو هو الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) eternally with (at, near, by) *Allāh,* and *Allāh* is himself the Word.
		f.248r فالله لم راه احد قط الوحيد الله الذي هو في حضن ابوه فهو اخبر	And no one has ever seen *Allāh.* The only *Allāh* (*al-waḥīd Allāh*) who in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his Father, it is he who has told.

[3] In this manuscript the Gospel of John starts on f. 119r, with John 1.15. The prologue is missing.

Family VII

Ms number	*Date*	*Arabic text*	*Translation*
Beirut, Bibl. orient. or. 430	1885 (from an Archetype dated 980)	f.141r في البدى كان الكلمه موجود وهو الكلمه موجود عند الله والله كان الكلمه	In the beginning the Word was (*masc.*) existing, and he, the Word, was existing with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and *Allāh* is the Word.
		f.141v الله لم يره انسان قط الوحيد الله الذي هو في حضن ابيه هو افيض[4]	No human being has ever seen *Allāh*. The only *Allāh* who is in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his Father, he has spoken at length.

Family VIII

Ms number	*Date*	*Arabic text*	*Translation*
Sinai, St Catherine ar. 70	C. 9th	f.88r في البدي كان الكلمه والكلمه قد كان عند الله والاها كان الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) already (*qad kāna*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and the Word was (*masc.*) *Ilāh*.
		f.88v الله لم يراه احد قط الابن الوحيد اللاه الذي كان في حضن ابيه هو اخبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh*. The only Son, *al-Lāh*, who was in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his Father, he has informed.

Family IX

Ms number	*Date*	*Arabic text*	*Translation*
Leipzig, Univ. Lib. or. 1075	Between 750 and 850	f.112r الاولي كانت الكلمه والكلمه لم تزل عند الله والله هو كان الكلمه	The first was the Word and the Word never ceased to be (*fem.*)with *Allāh* and *Allāh* himself was the Word.
		f.112v. الله لم يعاينه انسان قط ووحيد الله الذي في حضن ابيه هو تكلم بهذا	No human being has ever seen (*yu'āyinuhu*) *Allāh*. And the only [one] of God (*waḥīd Allāh*) who in the bosom of his Father, he has spoken about that.

[4] The Arabic افيض is IV form past tense passive, while the Greek ἐξηγησατο is the aorist middle voice. Maybe this Greek middle voice justifies the Arabic passive.

Family X

Ms number	*Date*	*Arabic text*	*Translation*
Sinai, St Catherine ar. 101	c. 12th	f.310r في البدي كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله والله هو الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and *Allāh* is (*huwa- masc.*) the Word.
		f.311r الله لم يره احد قط الابن الوحيد الذي هو في حضن ابيه هو خبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh*. The only Son who is in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his Father, he has told.
Vatican, Vat. copt. 9	1204/5	f.273r في البدء كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله و اله[5] هو الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and *Ilāh* is (*huwa- masc.*) the Word.
		f.274r الله لم يره احد قط الابن الوحيد[6] الذي في حضن ابيه هو نطق[7]	No one has ever seen *Allāh*. The only Son, who is in the bosom (*ḥiḍn)* of his Father, he has spoken (*naṭak*- uttered).
London, Brit. Library or. 1315	1208	f.352v في البدى كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله والله هو الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with *(at, near, by) Allāh*, and *Allāh* is (*huwa- masc.*) the Word.
		f.354r الله لم يره احد قط الوحيد الاله الذي هو في حضن ابيه هو خبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh*. The only God (*al-waḥīd al-Ilāh*) who is in the bosom *(ḥiḍn)* of his Father, he has told.

[5] The first hand might have written الله and then amended to اله.
[6] In the margin it is written الوحيد الاله.
[7] In the margin it is written خبر.

Cambridge, Univ. Library Gg. 5.27	1285	f.74v في البدى كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله واله لم يزل الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with *(at, near, by) Allāh*, and *Ilāh* has never ceased to be the Word (or, the Word has never ceased to be *Ilāh*).
		f.74v الله لم يره احد قط الابن الوحيد الذي هو في حضن ابيه هو خبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh*. The only Son, who is in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his Father, he has told.
Rome, Bibio. Casanatense cod. 2309	c. 13/14th	f.206r في البداء كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله واله هو الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and *Ilāh* is (*huwa*) the Word.
		f.208r الله لم يره احد قط الابن الوحيد الذي هو في حضن ابيه هو خبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh*. The only Son who is in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his Father, he has told.
London, Brit. Library or. 1327	1334	f.186v في البدء كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله واله هو الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and *Ilāh* is (*huwa*) the Word.
		f.188r الله لم يره احد قط الابن الوحيد الذي هو في حضن ابيه هو خبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh*. The only Son, who is in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his Father, he has told.
Vatican, Vat. copt. 11	1346	f.3r في البدء كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله و الاه هو الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and *Ilāh* is (*huwa*) the Word.
		ff.4v-5r الله لم يره احد قط الاله الوحيد الذي في حضن ابيه هو خبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh*. The only God (*al-Ilāh al-waḥīd*), who is in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his Father, he has told.

Vatican, Vat. ar. 483	c. 16th	f.1v في البدى كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله والله هو الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and *Allāh* is (*huwa*) the Word.
		f.2v الله لم يره احد قط الابن الوحيد الذي في حضن ابيه هو خبر لنا[8]	No one has ever seen *Allāh*. The only Son, who is in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his Father, has told us.
London, Brit. Library Rundel 19	1616	f.116r في البدي كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله والله هو الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and *Allāh* is (*huwa*) the Word.
		f.116v الله لم يراه احد قط الابن الوحيد الذي لم يزل في حضن ابيه هو خبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh*. The only Son who has never ceased to be in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his Father, he has told.
London, Brit. Library or. 1316	1663	f.184r في البدء كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله والاله[9] هو الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and *al-Ilāh* is (*huwa*) the Word.
		f.184v الله لم يراه احد قط الاله الوحيد الذي في حضن ابيه هو خبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh*. The only God *(al-Ilāh al-waḥīd)* who is in the bosom *(ḥiḍn)* of his Father, he has told.
Vatican, Vat. ar. 609	c. 17th	f.37v في البدء كان الكلمه والكلمه من الله والهاً لم يزل الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) of/from (*min*) *Allāh,* and the Word has never ceased to be *Ilāh*.
		f.37v الله لم يراه احد قط الابن الوحيد الذي لم يزل في حضن ابيه هو خبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh*. The only Son who has never ceased to be in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his Father, he has told.

[8] Added later above the line in a different hand and ink.
[9] Above it in red is written الله.

Jerusalem, Orthodox Patr. ar. 207	1793	f.111r	في البدي كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله والاه لم يزل الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and *Ilāh* has never ceased to be (*masc.*) the Word.
		f.111v	الله لم يراه احد قط الابن الوحيد الذي هو في حضن ابيه هو خبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh*. The only Son who is (*huwa*) in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his Father, he has told.
London, Brit. Library or. 1001	c. 18th?	f.207v	في البدء كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله واله هو الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and *Ilāh* is (*huwa*) the Word.
		f.208v	الله لم يره احد قط الوحيد الاله الذي في حضن ابيه هو خبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh*. The only God (*al-waḥīd al-Ilāh*) who is in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his Father, he has told.
London, Brit. Library or. 1317	1815	f.323v	في البدء كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله والاه كان الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and *Ilāh* was (*kāna*) the Word.
		f.325r	الله لم يراه احد قط الابن الوحيد الذي في حضن ابيه هو خبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh*. The only Son, who is in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his Father, he has told.

Family XI

Ms number	*Date*		*Arabic text*	*Translation*
Oxford, Bodl. Lib. Hunt. 118	1259	f.257v	في البدء كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله والاها كان الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and *Ilāhan* was the Word.
		f.258v	الله لم يره احد[10] قط الاله الوحيد الذي في حضن ابيه لم يزل هو الذي اخبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh*. The only God (*al-Ilāh al-waḥīd*), who has never ceased to be (*masc.*) in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his Father, it is he who has informed.

[10] Some manuscripts have احدا.

London, Brit. Library or. 3382	1264/5	f.296v في البدء كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله والاها كان الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and *Ilāhan* was the Word.
		ff.297v-298r الله لم يره احد قط الاله الوحيد الذي في حضن ابيه لم يزل هو اخبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh*. The only God (*al-Ilāh al-waḥīd*), who has never ceased to be (*masc.*) in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his Father, he has informed.
Paris, Bibl. nat. copte 14	c. 13/14th	f.252r في البدي كان الكلمه والكلمه كان عند الله والاهاً هو الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and *Ilāhan* is the Word.
		f.253r-v الله لم يره احدا الاله الوحيد الذي في حضن ابيه هو اخبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh*. The only God (*al-Ilāh al-waḥīd*), who is in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his Father, he has informed.

Family XII

Ms number	*Date*	*Arabic text*	*Translation*
London, Brit. Library add. 9061	c. 15th	f.118r في البدي كانت الكلمه والكلمه كانت عند الله والكلمه هي الله	In the beginning was (*fem.*) the Word and the Word was (*fem.*) with (at, near, by) *Allāh*, and the Word is (*fem.*) *Allāh*.
		f.118r فالله لم يبصره احد قط ما عدا ما وصف عنه الولد الفريد الذي هو في حضانه ابيه	And no one has ever seen *Allāh* other than what the unique child (*al-Walad al-farīd*) has described about him who is in the bosom of his Father.

Family XIII

Ms. Number	*Date*	*Arabic Text*	*Translation*
Vatican, Vat. ar. 17	1009?	f.99r لقد كان المبدا الكلمه والكلمه لدى الله والاً كان الكلمه	There was the beginning the Word and the Word by (at, before, in the presence of) *Allāh*, and *Alan* was the Word.
		f.100r والله لم يره بشر فيما خلا: والآل الواحد من حضن أبيه كان نحا الذكرى	No human has ever (*fīmā khalā*) seen *Allāh* and the one *al-Āl* from his Father's bosom had (*naḥā al-dhikrā*).
Leiden, Univ. Bibl., cod. 561 Warn.	c. 15th	fol.120r لقد كان المبدا الكلمه والكلمه لدى الله والله كان الكلمه	There was the beginning the Word, and the Word was by (at, before, in the presence of) *Allāh* and *Allāh* was the Word.
		f.119v والله لم يره بشر فيما خلا: والآ ل الواحد من حضن أبيه كان نحا الذكرى	No human has ever (*fīmā khalā*) seen *Allāh* and the one *al-Āl* from his Father's bosom had (*naḥā al-dhikrā*).

Family XIV

Ms number	*Date*	*Arabic text*	*Translation*
Paris, Bibli. Nat. ar. 58	c. 17th	f.146r في البدى كان الكلمه والكلمه كان لدي الله والله هو الكلمه	In the beginning was (*masc.*) the Word and the Word was (*masc.*) by (at, before, in the presence of) *Allāh*, and *Allāh* is (*huwa*) the Word.
		f.146v الله لم يره احد قط ان الوحيد ابن الله الذي هو في حضن ابيه هو اخبر	No one has ever seen *Allāh*. The only Son of *Allāh*, who is in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of the Father, he informed.

The possible origins of the Arabic text of John 1.1 and 18

Four languages can possibly be the origin of the Arabic versions of the Gospels: Greek, Syriac, Coptic, and Latin. The verses of John 1.1 (In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God) and 1.18 (No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known)[11] are read in the four different languages (with the major variations) as follows:

(a) *A Greek origin*

John 1.1 (Nestlé-Aland)[12]

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

John 1.18 (Nestlé-Aland)

Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· μονογενὴς θεὸς[13] ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο.

(b) *A Syriac origin*[14]

(1) The Curetonian version
John 1.1

ܗܘܐ ܒܪܫܝܬ ܟܐ ܗܘܐ ܡܐܡܪܐ ܘܡܐܡܪܐ ܗܘܐ ܥܡ ܐܠܗܐ ܘܐܠܗܐ ܗܘܐ ܡܐܡܪܐ ܗܢܐ

.ܗܘܐ ܥܡ ܐܠܗܐ ܘܡܐܡܪܐ

[11] The *New Revised Standard Version*, 1989.

[12] *Novum Testamentum Graece*, ed. B. and K. Aland, J. Karavidopoulos, C.M. Martini, B.M. Metzger, 27th edition, Stuttgart, 1993.

[13] There are three main textual variations for this phrase. ὁ μονογενὴς υἱὸς is mainly attested by the Byzantine type of text (A C^3 K W^{supp} C Δ Θ Π Ψ 063 f^1 f^{13} 28 565 700 892 1009 1010 1071 1079 1195 1216 1230 1241 1242 1253 1344 1365 1546 2148); ὁ μονογενὴς θεὸς, found in $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ and א^1; and μονογενὴς θεὸς which belongs to the Alexandrian text-type and is found in $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$ א* B C^* L (cf. Nestlé-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 248.)

[14] The texts of the different Syrian versions are taken from G.A. Kiraz, *Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels: Aligning the Sinaiticus, Curetonianus, Peshiṭṭā and Ḥarklean Versions*, Leiden, 1996, pp.3, 7-8. The *Meltho* font is from Beth Mardutho: The Syriac Institute [www.BethMardutho.org].

John 1.18

ܐܠܗܐ ܡܢ ܠܥܠܡ ܠܐ ܚܙܐ ܝܬ ܒܪ ܝܚܝܕ ܕܗܘ ܒܚܝܪܬ ܠܗ ܒܚܝܪ
ܠ ܡܫܝܚܐ

(2) The Peshiṭtā version
John 1.1

ܒܫܪܝܬ ܗܘܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܘܡܠܬܐ ܗܘܬ ܥܡ ܐܠܗܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܗܘܬ ܘܐܠܗܐ ܗܘܬ ܠܡܠܬܐ

ܗܢܘ ܒܫܪܝܬ ܥܡ ܐܠܗܐ ܘܐܠܗܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܗܘܬ ܗܢܘ

John 1.18

ܐܠܗܐ ܘܐܠܗܐ ܕܝܚܝܕ ܕܐܦ ܒܥܠܡܐ ܕܐܬܝ ܠܐ ܚܙܐ ܐܢܫ ܒܪ ܐܠܗܐ

ܗܘ ܕܝܚܝܕ ܥܡ ܐܒܘܗܝ ❖ ܡܫܝܚܐ

(3) The Harklensis (Harklean) version
John 1.1

ܒܫܘܪܝܐ ܗܘܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܘܡܠܬܐ ܗܘܬ ܥܡ ܐܠܗܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܗܘܬ ܘܐܠܗܐ ܗܘܬ

ܗܢܘ ܡܠܬܐ ܗܘܬ ܥܡ ܐܠܗܐ

John 1.18

ܐܠܗܐ ܕܝܚܝܕ ܗܘ ܒܥܠܡ ܐܦ ܐܢܫ ܚܙܐ ܠܐ ܝܬ ܐܢܫ ܒܪ ܐܠܗܐ ܕܝܚܝܕ

ܗܘ ܥܡ ܐܒܘܗܝ

(c) *A Coptic origin (the northern dialect) with English translation*[15]

John 1.1

ϧεν ταρχη νε πιϫαϫι πε. ονοϥ πιϫαϫι ναϥχη ϧατεν
ϕ'ϯ. ονοϥ νε ονηογ ϯ πε πιϫαϫι

In (the) beginning was the Word, and the Word was (*imperf.*) with God, and God (*indef. art.*) was the Word.

John 1.18

ϕϯ ωπε ϧλι ναγ ερος ενεϩ. πιμονογενηϛ ηηογ ϯ ϕη
ετχη ϧεν κενϥ ωπεϥιωτ ηθοϥ πεταϥϫαϫι

[15] The Coptic version and the translation are from G. Horner, *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Northern Dialect otherwise called Memphitic and Bohairic with Introduction, Critical Apparatus, and Literal English Translation*, vol. II, *The Gospel of S. Luke and S. John edited from Ms. Huntington 17 in the Bodleian Library*, Osnabrück, 1969, pp. 332-3 and 336-7. In the present article, we will rely mainly on the English translation.

God no one ever saw: the only-begotton God (*without article*), who is in the bosom of his Father, he spoke.

(d) *A Latin origin*

John 1.1[16]

in principio erat Verbum et Verbum erat apud Deum et Deus erat Verbum

John 1.18

(1) Codex a (Old Latin) : Deum nemo vidit umquam nisi unicus Filius (suus?) sinum Patris ipse enarravit

(2) Vulgate: Deum nemo vidit umquam unigenitus Filius qui est in sinu Patris ipse enarravit

(3) Codex q (Old Latin) : Deum nemo vidit umquam unigenitus Filius Dei qui est in sinu Patris ipse enarravit

Grouping and commenting on a selection of unit-variations in the Arabic versions[17]

(a) *Unit-variations in John 1.1a*

يوحنا *1.1*أ	*John 1.1a*	*Family number*
لم يزل الكلمه	The word has never ceased to be (*masc.*)	Family 1
لم تزل الكلمه	The word has never ceased to be (*fem.*)	Family 1^{m}
كانت الكلمه	The word was (*fem.*)	Family 1, 9^{all} and 12^{all}
كان الكلمه	The word was (*masc.*)	Family 2^{all}, 3^{all}, 4^{all}, 6^{all}, 8^{all}, 10^{all}, 11^{all}, 14^{all}
لقد كان...الكلمه	The word was (*masc.*) already	Family 13^{all}
كان الكلمه موجود	The word was existing	Family 7^{all}

These variations suggest that two major changes had occurred in John 1.1a:

[16] As found in Codex Vercellensis (a), Codex Monacensis (q) and the Vulgate. For the Old Latin see A. Jülicher, *Itala: Das Neue Testament in altlateinischer Überlieferung, IV- Johannes-Evangelium*, Berlin, 1963. For the Vulgate see *Biblia Sacra Vulgate*, 4th edn, Stuttgart, 1994.

[17] The letter ^{m} stands for 'majority text'. The word ^{all} stands for 'all the texts collated'.

Firstly, the Greek verb ἦν, Syriac ܗܘܐ, and Latin *erat*, etc., are translated into Arabic by يزل / تزل, كانت/كان, لم لقد كان and كان...موجود. The form كانت/كان, the past tense of 'to be', faithfully translates the meaning of the original ἦν,which might imply pre-existence (as opposed to صار ('ἐγένετο) which means 'came into existence'). The expression لقد كان (was already), and كان...موجود (was existing) stresses the pre-existence of the Word with its relationship with the creation. But كان does not denote a *continuous* existence, as, for example, is the case with the imperfect tense ἦν, as opposed to the *aorist* tense used in verses 3, 6 and 14 of John 1. As the result, some scribes emphasize this continuity of existence by translating the original word as لم يزل/ تزل (has never ceased) instead of كان. In Arabic, the phrase في البدء لم يزل is grammatically cumbersome.

Secondly, another variation has taken place as the result of the gender of the Arabic word *kalima* and to whom it refers. Although الكلمه is feminine and the verbs كان and يزل should follow the gender of the subject and thus be translated as لم تزل/ كانت, some translations have kept the verbs in the masculine (with a feminine subject) to denote the personification of the Logos—Jesus Christ. This is also found in the Syriac texts.

(b) *Unit-variations in John 1.1b*

يوحنا *1.1*ب	*John 1.1b*	*Family number*
والكلمه لم تزل عند الله	And the Word has never ceased to be (*fem.*) with (*'inda*) *Allāh*	Family 1^{m} and 9^{all}
والكلمه لم يزل عند الله	And the Word has never ceased to be (*masc.*) with (*'inda*) *Allāh*	Family 1 and 4^{all}
والكلمه كان عند الله	And the Word was (*masc.*) with (*'inda*) *Allāh*	Family 2^{all}, 3^{all}, 10^{m}, 11^{all},
والكلمه كانت عند الله	And the Word was *(fem.)* with (*'inda*) *Allāh*	Family 12^{all}
وهو الكلمه موجود عند الله	And the Word exists with (*'inda*) *Allah*	Family 7^{all}
وهو الكلمه كان ازلى عند الله	And the Word was eternally with (*'inda*) *Allāh*	Family 6^{all}
والكلمه قد كان عند الله	And the Word was (*masc.*) already with (*'inda*) *Allāh*	Family 8^{all}

والكلمه كان لدى الله	And the Word was *(masc.)* with (*ladā*) *Allāh*	Family 14[all]
والكلمه لدى الله	And the Word with (*ladā*) *Allāh*	Family 13[all]
والكلمه من الله	And the Word from *Allāh*	Family 10

Two major changes occur in John 1.1b. The first has to do with the translation of the tense of the verb 'to be' as in John 1.1a, and the second with the preposition 'with'.

In addition to the different Arabic renderings for the imperfect tense of the verb 'to be' (cf. above), the scribe of Vat. syr. 269 (Family 6) has added the expression ازلى (eternal, eternally) to the verb كان to emphasis the fact that there was not time when the Word did not exist; that is; his existence is timeless. The expression وهو الكلمه كان ازلى عند الله and وهو الكلمه موجود seems to be closer to the Syriac (the Peshiṭtā or the Curetonian version) than the Greek, Coptic or Latin.

The second change has to do with the preposition 'with' (Greek πρὸς; Syriac ܥܡ; Coptic ϩⲁⲧⲉⲛ; Latin *apud)*. Three different translations emerged:

a. عند, which is an adverb of time and place denoting presence and nearness; 'it is primarily used in relation to that which is present with a person…thus it signifies *at, near, nigh, by […] in the presence of…*'.[18] Most scribes adopted this translation.

b. لدى, which means 'at, by, in the presence of, in front of, before, with'; it is used by one family of manuscripts. (لدى and عند are synonymous in *Lisān al-'Arab.*)[19]

c. من, which means 'of' or 'from' is found in mss Vat. ar. 609 of the seventeenth century and also Cambridge Add. 3508 of the early nineteenth century. The Greek word πρός can be translated in different ways, but never to mean 'of'. παρα with the genitive means 'of' or 'from', but it lacks textual evidence. The Syriac has ܥܡ (toward, to, against), and not ܡܢ. The Coptic also has 'with'. The Latin *apud* designates 'nearness in respect of persons, *with, near*', and also '*before, in the presence of*' (italic original).[20] So the rendering of

[18] See E.W. Lane, *Arabic English Lexicon*, Cambridge, 1984, vol. II, p. 2171.

[19] See لدى in Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, Beirut, 1990, vol. XV, p. 245, and لدن in vol. XIII, p. 383.

[20] See *apud* in C.T. Lewis and C. Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, Oxford, 1879, p. 145.

the word من in the Arabic lacks textual support in other versions.

(c) *Unit-variations in John 1.1c*

يوحنا 1.1ج	*John 1.1c*	*Family Number*
واله لم تزل الكلمه	And *Ilāh* has never ceased to be (*fem.*) the Word	Family 1^{m}
واله لم يزل الكلمه	And *Ilāh* has never ceased to be (*masc.*) the Word	Family 10
والهاً لم يزل الكلمه	And *Ilāhan* (*acc.*) has never ceased to be (*masc.*) the Word	Family 1, 2, 10
والله لم يزل الكلمه	And *Allāh* has never ceased to be (*masc.*) the Word	Family 1
واله لم تزل الكلمه	And *Ilāhin* (*gen. sic!*) has never ceased to be (*fem.*) the Word	Family 10
والكلمه لم يزل الاها	And the Word has never ceased to be (*masc.*) *Ilāh*	Family 3
والكلمه لم تزل الاها	And the Word has never ceased to be (*fem.*) *Ilāh*	Family 3
والاه لم تزل الكلمه	And *Ilāh* has never ceased to be (*fem.*) the Word	Family 2
والاه لم يزل الكلمه	And *Ilāh* has never ceased to be (*masc.*) the Word	Family 2, 10
والله هو الكلمه	And *Allāh* is (*huwa*) the Word	Family 10^{m}, 14^{all}
واله هو الكلمه	And *Ilāh* is (*huwa*) the Word	Family 10
والاه هو الكلمه	And *Ilāh* is (*huwa*) the Word	Family 10
والاله هو الكلمه	And *al-Ilāh* is (*huwa*) the Word	Family 10
والاها هو الكلمه	And *Ilāhan* (*acc.*) is (*huwa*) the Word	Family 11
فالله هو هو الكلمه	And *Allāh* is himself (*huwa huwa*) the Word	Family 6 ^{all}
الكلمه هي الله	And *Allāh* is (*hiya*) the Word	Family 12 ^{all}
والله هو كان الكلمه	And *Allāh* himself/he was (*huwa kāna*) the Word	Family 9^{all}
والاه كان الكلمه	And *Ilāh* was the Word	Family 4^{all}, 10
والاها كان الكلمه	And *Ilāhan* was the Word	Family 8^{all}, 11^{m}

والاً كان الكلمه	And *Ilan* was the Word	Family 13
والله كان الكلمه	And *Allāh* was the Word	Family 7 [all], 13

Three reasons appear to lie behind the diversity in translations of John 1.1c:

1. The translation of the verb 'to be'

We have seen above that the reason for replacing or translating the Greek ἦν, Syriac substantive ܗܘܳܐ etc. with لم يزل/ تزل is to emphasize the *continuous* existence of the Logos. Moreover, the pronoun هي/هو,which can be translated into English by the auxiliary 'to be' in the present tense, is introduced here. It better translates ἐστιν than ἦν and may have been used to emphasis the Word's *timelessness* as *Allāh;* he was, is, and always will be *Allāh.* The most probable reason for the occurrence of هو is that it literally translates the Peshiṭtā (or Curetonian) version.

2. The original exemplar of 'the Word was God'

The Greek and the Coptic versions of John 1.1c have no definite article for the noun 'God'. The Arab scribes who were translating this phrase from either the Greek or the Coptic tried to be faithful to the text they were translating, and some of them ended up with the indefinite اله instead of الله with the article. No such differentiation can be clearly found in the Syriac or Latin text of John 1.1.

3. The anarthrous state of 'θεός'

It seems as if the scribes who were translating this phrase (esp. from the Greek where the text reads καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος), or those who were copying from another Arabic source, found the anarthrous state of θεὸς of some significance, and as a result of that they followed three different approaches:

The literal-approach scribes who translated θεός by اله ([a] God) and ὁ θεὸς by الله ([the] God). This differentiation may possibly have caused a misrepresentation of the monotheistic belief that the Christianity firmly holds especially in an Islamic milieu. The earlier versions of the Gospels seem to prefer this translation.

The grammatical-approach scribes who saw the anarthrous θεός as a hint of the state of the noun as the predicate and not the subject of the sentence. Some ended with الهاً or الهٍ (accusative or genitive

respectively) to emphasize that الكلمه is the subject of the phrase. Others reversed the words of the phrase واله لم يزل الكلمه ('and [a] God has never ceased to be the Word') to والكلمه لم يزل/تزل الاها ('the Word continuous to be [a] God').

The theological-approach scribes who might have seen that والاله هو الكلمه or والله هو الكلمه can either mean that God is the Word or that the Word is God. To eliminate such confusion and to avoid seeing God as the Word but instead the Word as God, scribes might have felt obliged to write down اله/ الها/ اله instead of الله or الاله. A second reason could be to make a distinction between the Logos and the Father. This may explain why we find in some manuscripts the expression الاله and not الله when it is referred to Jesus.

(d) *Unit-variations in John 1.18a*

يوحنا *1.1* ج	*John 1.1c*	*Family number*
الله لم يراه (يره) احد قط	No one has ever seen *Allāh*	Family 1^{m}, 3, 4^{all}, 8^{all}, 10^{all}, 11^{all}, 14^{all},
الله لم يره انسان قط	No human being has ever seen *Allāh*	Family 7^{all}
فالله لم راه احد قط	No one ever saw (*ra'ahu*) *Allāh*	Family 6^{all}
الاله لم يراه احد قط	No one has ever see *al-Lāh*	Family 1
الله لم يره بشر فيما حلا	No human has ever seen God	Family 13^{all}
لان ليس انسان راى الله البته	Because no human being has ever seen *Allāh*	Family 5^{all}
الله لم يعاينه انسان قط	No human being has ever seen (*yu'āyinuhu*) *Allāh*.	Family 9
الله ما ابصره احد قط	No one ever saw (*abṣarahu*) *Allāh*	Family 2^{all}, 3^{m}
فالله لم يبصره احد قط ما عدا ما وصف عنه	No one has ever seen (*yubṣiruhu*) *Allāh* with the exception of the one who described him	Family 12^{all}

Two major textual variations can be discovered in John 1.18c. The first is the addition of the words انسان and بشر. This addition is not explicitly found in Greek, Coptic or Latin, which may show that the scribes were translating from a Syriac text. The second major variation is the addition of the expression 'with the exception of'

(Family 12 above). This probably renders the *nisi* of the Old Latin Codex (a).

(e) *Unit-variations in John 1.18b*

يوحنا *18:1* ᵛ	*John 1.18b*
الابن الوحيد الازلى	The only eternal Son
الابن الوحيد	The only Son
الوحيد الاله	The only God *(al-waḥīd al-Ilāh)*
الاله الوحيد	The only God *(al-Ilāh al-waḥīd)*
الوحيد الاله	The only God *(al-waḥīd al-Ilāh)*
الابن الوحيد اللاه	The only Son *al-Lāh*
الآل الواحد	The one (*wāḥid*) *al-Āl*
الوحيد ابن الله	The only Son of *Allāh*
الولد الفريد	The unique child
الوحيد الله	The only *Allāh*

The textual variations behind these Arabic versions reflect the diversity of translations. The unit-variations can be grouped in three major clusters:

الابن الوحيد الازلى	*The only eternal Son*	*Family 1^{m}*
الابن الوحيد	The only Son	Family 1, 2^{all}, 3^{all}, 4^{all}, 5^{all}, 10^{m}
الولد الفريد	The unique child	Family 12^{all}

The original texts of the three translations above do not have the expression 'God' (θεὸς). This reading is supported by Greek manuscripts of Byzantine and Caesarean text-types, the Curetonian and the Harklean Syriac versions, and by the Latin Vulgate and Old Latin Codex (a). The 'Son' is translated either by الابن, which is the most common rendering, or by الولد probably translating the Latin word *Filius*. The expression *monogenes* is translated by (a) 'the only', (b) 'the only and eternal', (c) 'unique' (*unicus* and not *unigenitus!*) or (d) 'the only (eternal) *Son*' (if the origin has only ὁ μονογενής and seen as a substantive and equivalent to μονογενὴς υἱὸς),[21] and

[21] Ὁ μονογενὴς on its own, without θεὸς or υἱὸς is found in vg^{ms} *Diatessaron Aphrahat*

finally by (e) 'the one'. It is notable that it has not been translated as المولود الوحيد (the only begotten) as in some printed versions of the Bible.

الاله الوحيد	The only God (*al-Ilāh al-waḥīd*)	Family 10, 11[all]
الآل الواحد	The one (*al-wāḥid*) *Āl*	Family 13[all]
الوحيد الاله	The only God (*al-waḥīd al-Ilāh*)	Family 10
الوحيد الالاه	The only God (*al-waḥīd al-Ilāh*)	Family 10
الوحيد الله	The only *Allāh*	Family 6[all], 7[all]
ووحيد الله	The only of *Allāh*	Family 9

The four different forms of written the word 'God' shows that there were different traditions of how θεὸς/ܐܠܗܐ should be written in Arabic. It could be possible that in John 1.1 and 18 the general formula is to translate ὁ θεὸς with a definite article by الله, and without the definite article by اللاه، الالاه، الاله. In this case, *monogenes* is translated either by 'the only' (*al-waḥīd*) or by 'the one' (*al-wāḥid*). The occurrence of الوحيد before 'God' follows literally the Greek (Alexandrian text-type), the Peshiṭtā, and the Coptic version. The expression ووحيد الله ('the only [one] of *Allāh*') is the translation of ὁ μονογενὴς θεου (genitive) and not ὁ μονογενὴς θεὸς (nominative). We do not know of any Greek manuscript which has the former rendering. The highly probable alternative is that ووحيد الله translates the Peshiṭtā ܐܠܗܐ ܚܕܝܕܝ.

الابن الوحيد اللاه	The only Son, *al-Lāh*	Family 8[all]
الوحيد ابن الله	The only the Son of *Allāh*	Family 14[all]

The original *Vorlage* must have had θεὸς but not necessarily ὑιὸς. The origins of the translation have either μονογενὴς ὑιὸς θεοῦ or ὁ μονογενὴς θεὸς. In the case of the first Arabic translation above, μονογενὴς is probably used as an equivalent to μονογενὴς ὑιὸς, with θεὸς as a substantive; the only Son, [who is] God. In the second case, the phrase الوحيد ابن الله (the only Son of God) seems

Ephraem Ps-Athanasius. (For a more elaborated study on the Greek texts of John 1.1 and 18, see M.J. Harris, *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus*, Grand Rapids MI, 1992, pp. 52-103.

not to be found in Greek, Coptic or Syriac and most of the Latin versions. It probably translates the *unigenitus filius Dei* of the Old Latin codex Monacensis (q) of the sixth/seventh century.

(f) *John 1.18c*

يوحنا *1.1*ج	*John 1.18c*	*Family number*
الذي في عب الاب	Who in the bosom (*ʿibb*) of the Father	Family 1^{m}
في عب الاب	In the bosom (*ʿibb*) of the Father	Family 1
الذي لم يزل في حضن الاب	Who has never ceased to be in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of the Father	Family 1, 2^{all}, 3^{all}, 4^{all}
الذي هو في حضن الاب	Who is in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of the father	Family 5^{all}
الذي في حضن الاب (هو)	Who in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of the father (is/he)	Family 1
الذي هو في حضن ابيه	Who is in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his Father	Family 7^{all}, 10^{m}, 14^{all}
الذي في حضن ابيه (هو)	Who in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his father (is/he)	Family 10, 11
الذي كان في حضن ابيه	Who was in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his Father	Family 8^{all}
من حضن ابيه	From the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his father	Family 13^{all}
الذي في حضن ابيه لم يزل	Who in the bosom (*ḥiḍn*) of his Father has never ceased	Family 11^{m}
الذي هو في حضانه ابيه	Who is in the bosom (*ḥaḍāna*) of his Father	Family 12^{all}

Three remarks can be made on John 1.18c:

The first remark is related to the pronoun 'his'/article 'the' in the phrase '…bosom of *his*/*the* Father'. The Coptic, Syriac (Curetonian and Peshiṭtā), and the Vulgate read '*his* father'. However, the Greek has τοῦ πατρὸς (the Father). For this specific verse, this unit-variation helps to identify the Arabic versions which are translated from or corrected against the Greek *Vorlage* and those which are not.

The second is that two words are used for 'bosom', عب and حضن. The earlier versions in Family 1 have عب and then changed to حضن.

The earlier form seems to have a Syriac origin, ܚܕܐ.

All the translations have في عب/حضن (‘*in* the bosom’) with the exception of one *saja*‘ Family which has من. The only *Vorlage* which reads ‘from’ (Syriac ܡܢ) is the Curetonian Syriac version. Since this Arabic *saja*‘ Family, Codex Leiden or. 561 Warn., is in general a paraphrased translation, it is hard to draw any conclusion about its *Vorlage*.

(g) *Unit-variations in John 1.18d*

يوحنا *1.1* ْ	*John 1.1d*	*Family number*
اخبر/خبر	Informed/told	Family 1^{all}, 2^{all}, 3^{all}, 4^{all}, 5^{all}, 6^{all}, 8^{all}, 10^{m}, 11^{all}, 14^{all}
نطق	Spoke/uttered	Family 10
وصف	Described	Family 12^{all}
افيض	Spoke at length, overflowed	Family 7^{all}
نحا الذكرى	*Naḥā al-dhikrā*	Family 13^{all}
هو تكلم بهذا	Spoke about this	Family 9

The verbs اخبر/خبر and نطق translate the Syriac ܡܠܠ, the Greek ἐξηγέομαι and the Coptic ‘spake’. The verb وصف (‘to describe’) seems to translate the Latin verb *enarravit*; and افيض (‘overflow’) seems to be an overstatement of ἐξηγέομαι. If ἐξηγέομαι means to make *fully* known, the verb افيض speaks of the step after the fullness of something. The expression نحا الذكرى seems to be a free interpretation of خبّر.

General conclusions

The general results of this case study can be summed up in four comments.

1. Possible suggestions for the origin of the Arabic versions of John 1.1 and 18

On the basis of a study of these two verses alone, it is almost impossible to draw any conclusions about the origin of the manuscripts from which they come. However, it is possible to suggest that the verses of John 1.1 and 18 in Families 1, 2, 3 and 4 are closer to

the Greek Byzantine or Caesarean text-type than other originals; Families 6, 7, 8 and 9 are closer to the Peshiṭtā, Family 5 to the Harklean version, Family 10 (known as the 'Alexandrian Vulgate') renders both the Greek and Syriac *Vorlagen* (some members of this Family have been corrected against the Coptic Bohairic versions); Family 11 (known as Ibn al-'Assāl's version) is closer to the Coptic original. Family 12 is closer to the Latin version and probably Latin Codex (a); since family 13 is in general a paraphrased translation, it is hard to draw any conclusion about its *Vorlage* from only two verses; finally, John 1.18 of Family 14 seems to be translated from or influenced by Latin Codex (q).

2. The reasons for the variant-readings
The variations have to do with at least seven factors:

(1) *Textual* variations because of four different language origins and various text-types, e.g. الاله الوحيد/الابن;
(2) Grammatical and syntactical constructions of specific phrases which lead to different translations (esp. John 1.1c);
(3) Theological convictions which are explicitly or implicitly expressed in some of the translations, e.g. هو، كان، لم يزل or الاله، لله، اله—words with theological connotation;
(4) Variety of traditions behind the spelling of some Arabic words (e.g. اله، الاه);
(5) Clarification and interpretation of obscure words, e.g. عب, حضن, μονογενής;
(6) The social and linguistic background of the scribe, e.g. اخبر, افيض، نحا الذكرى;
(7) The purpose of the translation and the target audience (vernacular, *saja'*, Christian or Muslim).

3. Family 10 or the 'Alexandrian Vulgate'
Family 10, which is also known as the Alexandrian Vulgate, has the most unit-variations. At least three possible reasons can be proposed:

Firstly, the widespread of this version and of the number of copies which have been reproduced. From the two hundred manuscripts investigated, in the full study of which this article is a small sample, almost a hundred belong to this specific version.

Secondly, the nature of this version. Since it is an eclectic recen-

sion produced to reach congregations from different linguistic and theological backgrounds, scribes were tempted to propose linguistic alternatives to the text to satisfy a specific context or to stay faithful to a particular tradition.

Thirdly, this Arabic version is found in most bilingual Copt-Arabic mss. To harmonize the Arabic text with the Coptic, some scribes were compelled to replace, omit, or change words or phrases of the Arabic texts. As a result, we were left with many amendments.

4. The word 'God' as an attribute of Jesus in John 1.1 and 18

The versions above show that the noun 'God' used to refer to Jesus has eight different forms: الآل، الا، الالاه، اللاه، الاله، الله، الاه، اله.

The earlier manuscripts seem to favour the expression اله when referring to Jesus in John 1.1c. Generally speaking, the word الله in this clause is found in late manuscripts, though a few date from the ninth century. The expression اله seems to give way to الاه in later manuscripts. The word الا is unusual and is found only in one version which goes back at least to the tenth century.

The case study above shows the richness and the variety of the Arabic Gospel versions and demonstrates the pressing need for a comprehensive study of the different versions of the Arabic Gospel manuscripts.

BIBLE ET LITURGIE CHEZ LES ARABES CHRÉTIENS (VIe–IXe SIÈCLE)

SAMIR ARBACHE

Au-delà de leurs divisions doctrinales ou ecclésiales, les communautés chrétiennes de Syrie et de Mésopotamie ont développé une activité missionnaire indubitable en particulier chez les Arabes de Syrie, de Palestine et de la Péninsule arabique. Cette présence chrétienne chez les Arabes est confirmée aux Ve et VIe siècles. D'autre part, les plus anciens textes bibliques ou liturgiques en arabe peuvent remonter au plus tôt au VIIIe siècle. Ces deux constats nous placent devant une question qu'il importe d'aborder. Elle peut se formuler ainsi: Comment expliquer l'apparition si tardive de textes bibliques ou liturgiques en arabe, alors que des populations arabes ont adhéré au christianisme depuis plusieurs siècles ?

En ce chapitre cette question sera abordée sous deux aspects: un aspect culturel, en particulier le rapport de ces populations arabes à l'écriture, et un aspect ecclésiastique, la manière dont les chrétiens arabes étaient encadrés par le clergé et par d'autres formes institutionnelles.

Rappel des traits culturels du christianisme arabe avant 622

Avant le VIIe siècle, (ou avant la fondation de l'État arabe des Omeyyades) les Arabes vivent selon une organisation tribale dont le chef exerce une autorité sur une ou plusieurs tribus. À cela s'ajoute que le centre du pouvoir n'est pas stable ni dans l'espace ni dans le temps. Ensuite la majorité d'entre eux sont des nomades qui circulent sur un territoire couvrant toute l'Arabie et le désert de Syrie, jusqu'aux aux confins de l'Anatolie. Hormis le Yémen qui est urbanisé de longue date, certaines tribus sont sédentaires et pratiquent l'agriculture et le commerce. Les villes et les oasis connaissent un lien de dépendance par rapport aux nomades.

Ces Arabes, qu'ils soient nomades ou sédentaires, conservent leur patrimoine historique, culturel et mythologique selon le mode de

transmission orale. Ils font un usage utilitaire et marginal de l'écriture, sans éprouver encore le besoin de l'adopter comme vecteur majeur de transmission. C'est la raison pour laquelle, malgré leur nombre, les inscriptions arabes ne renvoient pas à des productions littéraires avant le VIIe siècle. Et plus largement, nous n'avons trouvé ni au Yémen ni ailleurs aucune trace ou allusion sur l'existence de livre littéraire, historique ou autre, antérieure à cette période. La société arabe se distingue donc par son système tribal, sa population nomade et la transmission orale de sa culture. Ces traits sont à prendre au sérieux; ils sauront résister au changement jusqu'au milieu du IXe siècle.

S'il est vrai que les Ghassanides, tribus arabes christianisées du Nord-Ouest de l'Arabie, ont établi des rapports politiques et militaires avec l'empire byzantin, et que certaines de leurs tribus étaient chrétiennes, il n'en reste pas moins que leurs structures culturelles sont restées conformes au schéma indiqué plus haut et que la pratique de l'écriture littéraire ne semble pas avoir été promue ou encouragée.

Plus à l'est, chez les rois lakhmides de Ḥīra, certains indices archéologiques et historiques orientent vers une ouverture du royaume sur les courants religieux et littéraires. Ils indiquent probablement un début de transformation socio-culturelle en direction de l'écriture littéraire. Le courant manichéen y était agréé, et un texte tardif d'Ibn Qutayba rapporte que le manichéisme (*zandaqa*) était chez des Quraych qui l'avaient pris des gens de Ḥīra.[1] Cette présence de chrétiens et de manichéens à Ḥīra peut avoir suscité un premier mouvement en faveur de l'écriture littéraire.

Et de fait, l'alphabet arabe semble provenir d'une ancienne forme d'alphabet syriaque, adoptée à Ḥīra où il a été utilisé dans sa forme ambiguë et archaïque[2] jusqu'au VIIe siècle.[3] Il fallait cependant attendre l'instauration d'un état arabe fort et stable à Damas, pour

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[1] Texte cité par M. Tardieu, 'L'arrivée des Manichéens à Al-Hîra', dans *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam, VII-VIIIe siècles*, Actes du colloque international, publié par Pierre Canivet et Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais, Damas, 1992, p. 15.

[2] Exemples de certaines lettres polyvalentes: b et d.

[3] Voir G. Troupeau, 'Réflexions sur l'origine syriaque de l'écriture arabe', dans *Collectif, Studia Islamica*, Leiden, 1992, pp. 1562-70, et Ch. Robin, 'Les plus anciens monuments de la langue arabe', *Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 61, 1991, p. 113-25. Une autre hypothèse fait dériver l'écriture arabe de l'alphabet nabatéen.

que la langue arabe devienne langue de culte et de culture, et que grâce à lui, la société arabe soit entraînée vers la civilisation de l'écrit. Ce que Ḥīra a probablement ébauché Damas, capitale des Omeyyades, saura le mener à maturité.[4]

Par ailleurs, le texte coranique renvoie à des mondes culturels très riches : il prend position vis-à-vis des religions juive et chrétienne, traitant des manichéens, des mazdéens et même de la gnose,[5] et s'offre, semble-t-il, comme une tentative de synthèse religieuse et culturelle de son époque. Or nous manquons de lumières pour mieux connaître cette société arabe du VIIe siècle traversée et sollicitée par les courants intellectuels et religieux, en provenance de Syrie, de Perse et d'Éthiopie.

En réalité la diffusion du christianisme parmi les tribus arabes ne s'accompagne d'aucun changement sur le plan de l'organisation tribale traditionnelle. En un sens l'histoire des Arabes chrétiens se confond avec l'histoire des Arabes. Peut-être est-ce là une composante de son originalité. On ne peut la comparer à celle des Arméniens et des Géorgiens, deux peuples organisés en états qui inventèrent leur alphabet pour la transmission de la Bible et la pratique du culte. Ainsi, les conditions sociales, politiques et culturelles qui prévaudront sous les Omeyyades vont s'appliquer sur tous les Arabes, à quelque religion qu'ils appartiennent. Les Arabes chrétiens escorteront activement ces changements et, sans tarder, mettront par écrit leur patrimoine religieux, biblique et liturgique en particulier.[6] Ces mêmes circonstances expliquent, selon nous, pourquoi il n'existe pas de textes chrétiens arabes avant le VIIe siècle. Et cependant la question reste posée: quelles sont les pratiques cultuelles et liturgiques de ces chrétiens nomades, avant le VIIe siècle?

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[4] Il y aurait lieu de développer une réflexion portant sur le rapport structurel entre la pratique de l'écriture et l'existence de l'état.

[5] Voir G. Gobillot, 'La démonstration de l'existence de Dieu comme élément du caractère sacré d'un texte. De l'hellénisme tardif au Coran', dans D. de Smet, G. de Callataÿ et J.M.F. van Reeth, éds, *Al-Kitāb: La sacralité du texte dans le monde de l'islam, Actes du symposium International tenu à Leuven et Louvain-la-Neuve du 29 mai au 1 juin 2002* (*Acta Orientalia Belgica, Subsidia* 3), Bruxelles, 2004, pp. 103-42.

[6] Voir G. Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* vol. I, Città del Vaticano, 1944, et S. Arbache, '*Une ancienne version arabe des Évangiles: langue, texte et lexique*', Thèse de doctorat de l'Université Michel de Montaigne, Bordeaux, 1994.

Structures ecclésiales et liturgie des Arabes chrétiens

Apparemment les réponses à cette question restent partielles, sinon insatisfaisantes. Nous tenterons cependant de réunir quelques indices d'ordre archéologique, littéraire, hiérarchique et iconographique pour proposer une réponse provisoire fondée sur l'état actuel de nos connaissances.

Indices archéologiques

Au milieu du IVe siècle, trois églises sont construites, aux frais d'un roi Himyarite, à Zafār, Aden et dans un port de la région d'Aden. Vers 530, le roi abyssin Abraha construit la cathédrale de Ṣanʿa. Son nom *al-Qalīs* (l'église) est encore donné aujourd'hui à un vieux quartier de la capitale, et certains chapiteaux réutilisés dans la grande mosquée portent en relief une croix. De plus, une inscription en sudarabique, datant du règne d'Abraha, nous informe que : Après qu'ils eurent envoyé cet appel et que furent soumis les nomades, on célébra une messe dans l'église de Maʾrib car il y avait là un prêtre, abbé de son monastère.[7]

De l'autre côté de l'Arabie, dans la région du Golfe, des fouilles ont mis au jour des vestiges d'une église à Faylaka, sur une île près du Kuweit, et un sanctuaire à al-Jubayl en Arabie Séoudite, ainsi que deux pierres marquées d'une croix à Thāj.[8] Dans un premier temps, on peut penser que les églises ont été construites pour servir aux chrétiens de passage. Mais sous Abraha, des tribus entières sont chrétiennes et les maisons de culte leur sont destinées. Les fouilles ne font que commencer dans ces régions. Et il n'y a pas de doute que des vestiges de lieux de culte et de cimetières seront trouvés.

Indices littéraires

En considérant ce qui nous est parvenu au sujet de la persécution des chrétiens de Najrān[9] en 523, on constate que les documents

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[7] Ch. Robin, 'Du paganisme au monothéisme', *Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée* 61, 1991, [pp. 139-55] p. 148. Les indices archéologiques s'appuient principalement sur cet article.

[8] Robin, 'Du paganisme', pp. 148 et 150.

[9] J. Ryckmans, *La persécution des chrétiens Himyarites au sixième siècle*, Istanbul, 1956; idem, 'A confirmation of main hagiographic accounts of the Najran persecution',

les plus anciens qui relatent ces faits sont écrits en syriaque ou en grec. Mais outre une inscription en sudarabique,[10] nous manquons de récits en arabe et les chrétiens arabes de Najrān et du Yémen restent muets à ce sujet !

Au milieu du VIIe siècle, 'le poète Labid ibn Rabîa (mort vers 660), relatant un voyage qui le mène de la Yamama vers les régions côtières d'al-Hajar raconte qu'on devinait la proximité des villages grâce au chant des coqs et aux battements des simandres des églises qui invitaient au culte.'[11]

Plus au nord, dans les confins de Jérusalem, les chrétiens des paremboles nous sont connus par 'la Vie de saint Euthyme' (377-473).[12] Ils sont considérés comme des fidèles de l'Église de Jérusalem. L'un d'entre eux, le moine arabe Élie, disciple de saint Euthyme, deviendra évêque de la cité sainte (fin du Ve siècle). Cela signifie qu'il connaissait l'arabe et le grec.

À cela il faut ajouter que les nomades du désert de Syrie, par exemple, avaient régulièrement des rapports avec les aramophones du pays, et que par conséquent certains d'entre eux pouvaient pratiquer deux langues ou plus. Le bilinguisme ne serait pas étranger à une population mobile et pratiquant le commerce.[13] Du fait de cette mobilité et en raison de leurs liens ecclésiastiques structurels avec les Églises de Syrie et de Mésopotamie, il serait plus correct de consacrer l'expression 'Chrétiens syro-arabes' pour désigner la forme ecclésiale des Arabes chrétiens. Cette appellation a l'avantage d'exprimer clairement leurs attaches avec leur Église-mère, et permet par conséquent de donner du contenu à l'expression de 'christianisme nomade'. Cela nous écarte en outre de la notion d'Église nationale arabe, qui n'a jamais vu le jour à travers les siècles.

Paper presented to the Mahmud Ghul Memorial Seminar, Yarmuk University, December 8-11, 1984; I. Shahîd, *The Martyrs of Najrân: New Documents* (*Subsidia Hagiographica* 49), Bruxelles, 1971.

[10] Il s'agit de l'inscription (Jamme 1028). Voir Robin, 'Du paganisme', p. 151.

[11] Robin, 'Du paganisme', p. 149.

[12] R. Génier, *Vie de Saint Euthyme le Grand (377-473): les moines et l'Église en Palestine au Ve siècle*, Paris, 1909.

[13] Il y aurait lieu d'avancer peut-être la notion de 'nomadisme cultivé'?

Indices hiérarchiques

Dans ce contexte, on comprend mieux le titre ecclésiastique 'Évêque des Arabes'. Il s'agit en effet d'une expression consacrée, désignant d'ordinaire l'évêque ayant en charge la pastorale des Arabes chrétiens, sans être nécessairement arabe lui-même. Le plus célèbre d'entre eux est sans doute Georges des Arabes († 724), qui a traduit Aristote en syriaque et qui devait aussi connaître l'arabe. Cette fonction vient fonder l'idée que les Arabes chrétiens n'étaient pas organisés en Église autonome.[14] Il est donc difficile dans ce contexte de parler d'une Église des Arabes.[15]

Ce lien structurel avec les Églises de Syrie et de Mésopotamie est confirmé par une correspondance du Catholicos Yūḥannā fils de ʿĪsā (900-5), qui répond de Bagdad à un prêtre du Yémen nommé al-Ḥasan Ibn Yūsuf al-Naṣrānī, *al-qas*, sur des questions ecclésiastiques diverses.[16] Trois d'entre elles, les n° 6, 14 et 20, peuvent éclairer notre propos. Elles portent sur 'la consécration des autels et des tables'.

Vu leur intérêt, nous les traduisons ici:

> VI. Sur la table d'autel consacrée par l'évêque et rendue par lui à l'usage profane. Est-il permis aux prêtres de célébrer la liturgie sur elle?
>
> Réponse: Nous avons déjà strictement interdit que l'on utilise la table (*lawḥ*), dans toute ville où les hommes vivent en sécurité et où il leur est propice de consacrer un autel. Mais si l'endroit où ils habitent ne leur permet pas d'y avoir un autel, ils utiliseront la table par nécessité. En ce qui concerne l'annulation d'un autel, il revient aux évêques ordinaires le droit d'annuler l'autel et les tables, s'ils le veulent, pourvu que la raison en soit manifeste. Et aucun prêtre n'a le droit de célébrer l'eucharistie sur un autel ou une table annulés par l'évêque. Celui qui célébrera l'eucharistie sur ce que l'évêque a déjà annulé, en répondra devant la loi et son offrande sera nulle.
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> XIV. Un prêtre et un diacre peuvent-ils célébrer l'eucharistie au-dessus des mains d'un diacre ?

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[14] Jusqu'aux années 1970, le patriarcat grec orthodoxe de Jérusalem administrait les Arabes chrétiens de Palestine par un clergé venant de Grèce!

[15] J. Corbon, *L'Église des Arabes*, Paris, 1977.

[16] Il s'agit d'une consultation sur des questions canoniques numérotées de 1 à 28, portant sur l'administration des sacrements (3, 11, 13, 19, 27, 28), l'accès à l'autel (12, 25), le droit matrimonial (8, 16, 24), le droit monastique (18, 21), le clergé (2, 4, 7, 10, 26), les excommuniés (5, 22, 23), les autels et les tables (6, 14, 20). G.S. Assemani, *Bibliotheca orientalis Clementino-vaticana*, Rome, 1719-28, vol. III, pp. 249-54.

> Réponse: cela n'est permis qu'en cas de nécessité et dans un pays où on ne dispose pas d'autel ni de table (*lawḥ*), et seulement après avoir demandé la permission à l'évêque du lieu de procéder ainsi pour la durée où c'est nécessaire. Et personne ne peut le faire sans la permission de l'évêque.
>
> XX. Un autel consacré se trouve dans un lieu menaçant. Est-il permis de l'arracher et de l'enterrer pour un temps puis de le restituer pour y célébrer l'eucharistie?
>
> Réponse: ce n'est pas permis. En effet, si l'autel a été arraché de son lieu et, *a fortiori*, s'il a été déplacé, il faut qu'il soit consacré à nouveau. Et si des personnes étrangères à notre confession pénètrent dans le sanctuaire mais n'arrachent pas le tabernacle, on célébrera une prière pour cette circonstance, et le sanctuaire sera béni du côté de l'orient en-deçà du tabernacle, par un signe de croix de la main et non par onction. Et cela est permis au prêtre sans la présence de l'évêque. Mais si le tabernacle a été arraché ou déplacé, il doit alors être consacré à nouveau, et cela par l'évêque ou par ordre de sa part, à l'exclusion de tout autre.[17]

Il ressort de ce texte que la célébration de l'eucharistie peut se faire sur une table, en l'absence d'autel, et même sur les bras du diacre, en cas d'absence d'autel et de table (questions 6 et 14). Dans des lieux soumis à la menace, l'autel qui a été démonté et enfoui, ne peut plus servir à nouveau, à moins d'être re-consacré par l'évêque du lieu. Si le lieu de célébration a été profané 'par des personnes étrangères à notre confession', sans toucher à l'autel, ce dernier sera béni par le prêtre d'un signe de croix (Question 20). Et il y a régulièrement mention de l'évêque du lieu (Questions 14 et 20), sans que l'on sache son origine.

Indices iconographiques

Dans les milieux monastiques, le novice arabe est appelé à assimiler tout ce que lui propose le monastère comme éducation religieuse et spirituelle, outre l'apprentissage de la langue (syriaque ou grecque). Tant et si bien qu'il sera intégré à sa communauté d'accueil. C'est ce qui ressort de l'examen des miniatures illustrant, en l'occurrence, le récit des martyrs de Najrân.

Le ménologe de Basile I (manuscrit Vatican grec 1613), du Xe

[17] Assemani, *Bibliotheca*, vol. III, pp. 250, 251 et 254.

siècle, contient les vies des saints et des martyrs selon le calendrier liturgique, illustrées par des miniatures.[18] Celles-ci ont été étudiées par Vassilios Christidès en vue d'y examiner en particulier les représentations de l'Arabe. Comment est présenté un chef de tribu visitant saint Siméon le Stylite (IVe siècle), ou encore saint Arethas dans le récit des persécutions de Najrān. La conclusion de cette étude donne une image diversifiée de l'Arabe selon qu'il est moine ou saint, simple fidèle ou agresseur. Dans le premier cas, il est identifié aux chrétiens byzantins avec des traits ascétiques et des habits conventionnels. Mais s'il s'agit de l'Arabe agresseur, il prend alors la forme du persécuteur habillé en Arabe. Dans le martyre de saint Arethas, le bourreau est représenté en tenue de soldat romain, comme pour évoquer le temps des persécutions.

Ces indices nous apportent un semblant de traces concrètes au sujet d'une réalité qui certes continue à nous échapper. Ils continuent cependant d'être des pierres d'attente dans la perspective de recherches plus poussées et d'apports venant des sites archéologiques ou des sources écrites. Nous abordons dans ce qui suit la question du culte proprement dit.

La pratique du culte

Il est probable que l'office était célébré dans la langue liturgique d'origine, le syriaque probablement, et qu'une traduction des principaux moments du culte était faite oralement. Et l'on peut affirmer en ce sens qu'il a existé des traductions orales de certains livres bibliques.[19] Dans un ḥadīth du *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* portant sur un cas d'adultère soumis au prophète Muḥammad, le récit montre comment le texte de la Torah est lu en hébreu puis traduit oralement en arabe.[20] Cette mise en scène peut être rapprochée de celle où

[18] Voir V. Christidès, 'Pre-Islamic Arabs in Byzantine illuminations', *Le Muséon* 83, 1970, pp. 167-81, et S. Arbache, 'Les moines chez les Arabes chrétiens avant l'islam', dans *Le monachisme syriaque I. Aux premiers siècles de l'Église IIe–début VIIe siècle, vol. I, Textes français, Patrimoine Syriaque, Actes du colloque V*, Antélias (Liban), 1998, pp. 299-304

[19] Si on lit attentivement les plus anciens manuscrits des Évangiles (VIIIe–IXe s.), on ne peut s'empêcher de déceler derrière certaines expressions une phase de transmission orale qui aurait précédé leur mise par écrit. Cf. n. 5.

[20] 'On amena à l'envoyé de Dieu, sur lui la bénédiction divine et le salut, un juif et une juive qui ont commis l'adultère. L'envoyé de Dieu, sur lui la bénédiction divine et le salut, s'en alla trouver des juifs et leur demanda: 'Que trouvez-vous dans la Torah

la lecture de l'Évangile est suivie d'une traduction et d'un commentaire.[21] Plus encore, la langue du culte chrétien peut avoir influencé le parler arabe. Et les nombreux mots d'emprunt d'origine syriaque dans le Coran devaient sans doute appartenir à la langue arabe de l'époque, à commencer par le terme Coran lui-même (*Qeryono*).

Par ailleurs, l'insistance du texte coranique sur une révélation donnée en 'langue arabe claire' (Q 16.3) peut signifier que les chrétiens et les juifs utilisent un texte étranger (*aʿjamī)* aux Arabes.[22] Est-ce à dire que les byzantins ou les syriaques adoptaient une attitude qui interdirait la traduction des textes bibliques et liturgiques en arabe? Cette idée ne trouve aucun fondement dans les textes grecs ou syriaques. Au contraire, l'Orient chrétien semble avoir toujours favorisé la transmission de la Bible dans la langue des fidèles. Et nous sommes, une fois de plus, renvoyés à la situation propre aux Arabes nomades ne réclamant pas encore l'usage du texte écrit.

Comment faire progresser nos connaissances sur ce sujet en l'absence d'informations précises?[23] Certains chercheurs ont tenté, à partir d'une documentation faible ou même défaillante, d'imaginer une entité ecclésiale arabe à partir de présupposés discutables d'ordre racial ou d'hypothèses cherchant un appui historique.

A. Havenith, par exemple, suggère qu'il a existé pour les Arabes

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contre celui qui commet l'adultère?' Ils répondirent: 'Nous noircissons leurs visages, nous les chargeons [sur une monture], les faces opposées (dos contre dos) et les promenons en procession. Il dit: 'Apportez la Torah si vous êtes véridiques.' Ils la sortirent et en firent la lecture. Arrivé au verset de la lapidation, le lecteur mit la main au-dessus du verset concernant la lapidation, et lut ce qui le précède et ce qui le suit. Alors ʿAbd-Allah Ibn Salām qui était en compagnie de l'envoyé de Dieu, sur lui la bénédiction divine et le salut, lui dit: 'Ordonne-lui d'ôter la main.' Il la leva et voici qu'en dessous se trouvait le verset de la lapidation.' (Al-Imām Muslim, *Al-jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 2 vols, Le Caire, 1383-4/1963-4, vol. V, p. 122). À propos de ce ḥadīth, voir A.-L. de Prémare, 'Prophétisme et adultère, d'un texte à l'autre', *Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée* 58, 1990, pp. 101-35.

[21] C'est dans ce sens qu'il aurait existé une transmission orale de récits bibliques ou liturgiques. Cf. Graf, *GCAL*, vol. I, p. 37.

[22] Cf S. Arbache, 'L'usage du terme Kitāb dans le Coran et dans une ancienne version arabe des Évangiles', dans D. de Smet, *et al.*, *Al-Kitāb*, pp. 321-32.

[23] Cf J. Ryckmans, 'Le Christianisme en Arabie du Sud préislamique', dans *Atti del Convegno Internazionale sul tema : L'Oriente cristiano nelle storia della civiltà*, Ac. Naz. dei Lincei, Rome, 1964, pp. 413-53; idem, 'La Persécution'; Shahîd, *The Martyrs*; R. Devreesse, *Le Patriarcat d'Antioche depuis la paix de l'Eglise jusqu'à la conquête arabe*, Paris, 1945; F. Nau, *Les Arabes chrétiens de Mésopotamie et de Syrie du VIIe et du VIIIe siècle*, Paris, 1933.

'un christianisme primitif',[24] présupposant un statut inférieur et peu cultivé des Arabes. De son côté I. Shahîd évoque 'une forme simplifiée d'une liturgie arabe' et conclut sur base d'une série de considérations hypothétiques peu solides, qu'il est 'possible d'affirmer qu'il a existé un Église nationale arabe fondée au IVe siècle'.[25] J.S. Trimingham parle de 'l'imperméabilité de la culture arabe au message chrétien', affirmant que la langue arabe est dans 'l'incapacité d'exprimer par ses propres moyens les choses spirituelles'.[26]

Dans le souci de prendre en compte les faibles résultats de l'enquête, et en attendant que des découvertes viennent combler un dossier plutôt lacunaire, nous pensons qu'il est possible de défendre l'hypothèse suivante: au moment où l'État arabe à Damas perfectionnait l'alphabet arabe et décrétait la langue arabe comme langue officielle de la chancellerie sous le calife 'Abd al-Malik (685-705), à ce moment-là, était fixée la forme canonique du Coran et commençait probablement la mise par écrit de textes bibliques et liturgiques transmis oralement jusqu'alors.

Ce développement en synchronie trouve un écho dans les résultats d'une enquête documentaire montrant que les plus anciens manuscrits arabes datés, tant musulmans que chrétiens, sont de caractère religieux. À titre d'exemple, un fragment du Coran est copié avant l'an 849 (229 de l'hégire), et un fragment de l'évangile de Jean remonte à l'an 845 (245 de l'hégire).[27] Et dans le manuscrit BL or. 5019 (daté de 1172), il est fait mention d'un texte traduit du grec en arabe en 772.[28] En outre, la plus ancienne version arabe des Evangiles est représentée par le manuscrit Sinaï arabe 72, le plus ancien manuscrit complet et daté des évangiles (a. 897). Il fait partie

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[24] A. Havenith, *Les Arabes chrétiens nomades au temps de Mohammed* (*Cerfaux-Lefort* 7), Louvain-la-Neuve, l988.

[25] Cf I. Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*, Washington DC, 1984; idem, *The Arabs in the Fourth Century*, Washington DC, 1984, en particulier pp. 418-42 et 550-6; et idem, 'The problem of an Arabic Bible and liturgy before the rise of Islam', dans K. Samir, ed., *Actes du premier congrès international d'études chrétiennes, Goslar, September, 1980* (*Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 218), Rome, 1982, pp. 481-90. Cf. aussi K. Samir, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 46, 1981, pp. 481-90.

[26] J.S. Trimingham, *Christianity Among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times*, London-Beirut, 1979, pp. 311 et 163.

[27] Voir V. Déroche, 'Les manuscrits arabes datés du IIIe/IXe s.', *Revue des Études Islamiques* 55-7, 1987-9, pp. 343-79.

[28] J. Blau, 'Über einige christlich-arabische Manuskripte aus dem 9. und 10. Jahrhundert', *Le Muséon* 75, 1962, [pp. 101-8] p. 103.

d'un groupe homogène de manuscrits dont l'origine se situerait en Palestine au milieu du VIIIe siècle.[29]

Conclusions

De l'ensemble des considérations qui précèdent, il est possible de faire les propositions qui suivent :

1. L'État arabe a précédé la religion musulmane constituée et a veillé sur sa croissance. Que serait devenu le texte coranique, transmis oralement, sans les structures de l'État arabe de Damas? La devise présentant l'Islam comme *Dīn wa-dawla* (Religion et État) devrait être inversée pour être conforme à l'histoire, ce serait plutôt *dawla* puis *dīn* (État puis Religion).

2. S'il est vrai que les Arabes chrétiens du sud de l'Irak sont à l'origine de l'alphabet arabe, et qu'ils ont contribué à sa diffusion vers le Ḥijāz (La Mekke et Médine), ils seront *a fortiori* les premiers, après les développements de cet alphabet, à l'utiliser pour leur textes bibliques et liturgiques. Concernant la période antérieure, il est nécessaire de donner à la culture orale toute son importance.

3. Les Arabes chrétiens ne se constitueront pas en état chrétien. L'Arabie a été terre de mission chrétienne. Et avec l'avènement de l'islam, l'appartenance religieuse tendra à se placer avant l'ethnique ou le culturel. L'expérience du christianisme arabe ou arabophone est caractérisée par cette absence de la protection de l'État, à l'inverse de ce qui advint en Occident, ou en Éthiopie, en Arménie, en Géorgie, et bien sûr en Grèce, héritière inconsolable de Byzance. Dans cette perspective, l'expérience non étatique des communautés chrétiennes, arabes et arabophones peut devenir objet de recherche dans l'Europe sécularisée du XXIe siècle, et dans le contexte confus du Proche-Orient.

4. Du point de vue ecclésiastique, il est préférable de parler de 'chrétiens syro-arabes' pour désigner ces Arabes chrétiens vivant un

[29] Les manuscrits de ce groupe sont les suivants: Harris 9 (1 folio) et Léningrad 281 (3 folios), deux fragments d'un manuscrit perdu du IXe s., Sinaï arabe 74 (IXe s.), Leipzig 1059 (IXe s.), Vatican arabe 95 (avant 885), Sinaï arabe 54 (Xe s.), Sinaï arabe 116 (lectionnaire bilingue grec-arabe avant 995), Berlin Orient Oct. 1108 (avant 1046), Sinaï arabe 97 (avant 1125) et Sinaï arabe 72 (avant 897).

christianisme sans État et sans Église autonome. Cette dépendance confessionnelle marquera ces communautés à travers l'histoire.

Toutes ces propositions se veulent ouvertes. Les développements futurs de nos connaissances viendront éclairer la part d'ombre et confirmer ou infirmer les pistes suggérées dans cette étude. Le sujet abordé reste d'importance pour l'histoire du christianisme des Arabes, autant que pour les débuts de l'islam.

ANTI-JEWISH POLEMIC AND EARLY ISLAM

SHAUN O'SULLIVAN

During the late sixth to early eighth centuries several anti-Jewish polemical texts appeared in Greek. These were written by Chalcedonian Christians, probably from Syria. Recent research points out that some of these texts demonstrate an awareness of Arabs and Islam and are directed in part at this new challenge posed to Christians.[1] Four texts in particular can be plausibly dated to the middle third of the seventh century and thus provide contemporary evidence for the extent to which the religion of the Arabs had formed at that early date. The *Doctrina Jacobi* and the *Trophies of Damascus* purport to record dialogues between Christians and Jews.[2] The *Disputatio Anastasii adversus Judaeos* and parts of *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem* of pseudo-Athanasius are collections of arguments against the Jews that would have served as preparatory tools for such dialogues.[3] The author of both texts was probably Anastasius of Sinai, known from many other writings, and active in Egypt and Syria during the period 640-700.[4]

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[1] G. Dagron and V. Déroche, 'Juifs et chrétiens dans l'Orient du VIIe siècle', *Travaux et Mémoires* 11, 1991, pp. 17-273; V. Déroche, 'La polémique anti-judaïque au VIe et au VIIe siècle: un mémento inédit, les *Képhalaia*', *Travaux et Mémoires* 11, 1991, pp. 275-311; D. Olster, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response, and the Literary Construction of the Jews*, Philadelphia, PA, 1994; A. Cameron, 'Byzantines and Jews: some recent work on early Byzantium', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 20, 1996, pp. 249-74; V. Déroche, 'Polémique anti-judaïque et émergence de l'islam', *Revue des Études Byzantines*, 1999, pp. 141-61. See also G. Dagron, 'Judaïser', *Travaux et Mémoires* 11, 1991, pp. 359-80.

[2] *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*, ed. G. Dagron and V. Déroche, 'Juifs et chrétiens'; *Trophies of Damascus*, ed. G. Bardy (*PO* XV), Paris, 1920, pp. 171-292.

[3] *Disputatio Anastasii*, *PG* LXXXIX, cols 1203-72. *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem*, *PG* XXVIII, cols 598-708, is largely though not entirely a work of anti-Jewish polemic. Déroche, 'La polémique anti-judaïque au VIe et au VIIe siècle', pp. 279, 283, 288-90, argues that Christian-Jewish debates took place even though the debates recorded in polemical literature records may be fictitious.

[4] The attribution of *Disputatio* to Anastasius of Sinai is viewed favourably by W. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 226-7, because a seventh-century compilation date can be proved and Anastasius' *Hodegos* records that he wrote an anti-Jewish treatise. Attribution to Anastasius of Sinai of the pseudo-Athanasian *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem* is discussed in J. Haldon, 'The works of An-

Christian anti-Jewish polemic aims to show that Jesus Christ is the Messiah whom the Jews expect, and that his coming marks the superseding of the Jewish nation (together with its covenant, law, and rituals) by the Christian Church. The polemic is based on the argument that Old Testament prophecy is fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, an argument that runs throughout the New Testament. But anti-Jewish polemic only assumed a distinct literary form with the gaining of historical perspective. The prototype and exemplar is Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* (c. 150), which assembles many Old Testament prophecies and demonstrates their fulfillment in Christ and the early Church.[5]

The seventh-century texts discussed below follow this tradition of arguing from biblical prophecy. They appear simply to be anti-Jewish texts, for none of them mentions the Arabs or Islam by name. However, they arise in the east Mediterranean region, probably in Syria, during and shortly after the early Arab conquests. Hence, it is not surprising that they contain indirect references to the Ar-

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astasius of Sinai: a key source for the history of seventh-century East Mediterranean society and belief', in A. Cameron, L. Conrad, and G. King, eds, *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, Princeton NJ, 1992, vol. I, [pp. 107-47] pp. 109-10. The *Quaestiones* forms part of a complex network of literary influence and textual dependence. It lies in a tradition of Christian question-and-answer collections going back to the third century, and it is closely related to the *Quaestiones et responsiones* of Anastasius of Sinai, ibid., pp. 116, 120-2. *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem* is also closely related to the *Disputatio* and to dialogues 3 and 4 of *Trophies of Damascus*. Finally, dialogues 1 and 2 of *Trophies* and parts of the *Disputatio* and *Quaestiones* are also closely related to another anti-Jewish text, the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo*, ed. A.C. McGiffert, *Dialogue between a Christian and a Jew*, Marburg, 1889, which probably appeared earlier (Déroche, 'La polémique anti-judaïque au VIe et au VIIe siècle', p. 282; Cameron, 'Byzantines and Jews', p. 260). The *Disputatio Gregentii cum Herbano Iudaeo* (*PG* LXXXVI, cols 621-784) also derives from the same Greek-speaking Syro-Chalcedonian milieu. Estimates of its date range from the late sixth to the early eighth century; Déroche, 'Polémique anti-judaïque et émergence de l'islam', pp. 147-56.

[5] Ibid., p. 284. See also Bardy, *Trophies of Damascus*, pp. 171-85 (the leading Old Testament prophecies used in the *Dialogue with Trypho* and later texts are the Suffering Servant passages in Is 53 and the Seven Weeks prophecy in Dan 9, but there are many others, including: Gen 1.26, 31; 3.22; 15.6; 18.2; 21.12; 49.10; Deut 21.23; 32. 20-1; Ps 2.2, 4-6; 8.2-8; 11.1-2; 16.10; 18.9-11, 50; 22.17-19; 28.3; 35.11-12; 37.14; 41.9; 44.7-8; 46.1-9; 49.3; 53.4-5; 68.3; 72.1, 6-9, 17; 86.9; 87.5; 88.6-8; 95.8-11; 98.3; 104.4; 106.21; 110.1-7; 117.1; 118.26-7; Prov 8.25; Is 2.3; 3.9-10; 6.9-10; 7.14-16; 8.18; 9.1, 5-6; 11.1-5;10; 27.11; 28.16; 35.4-5; 50.6; 52.14-15; 57.1; 59.20; 65.1; Jer 4.4; 9.25; 31.31-3; 32.9; Baruch 3.36-8; Dan 7.9-14; Hos 2.25; 6.1-3; Joel 2.10; Amos 8.9; Micah 5.1; Hab, 3.3; Zach 9.9; 11.12-13; 12.10; 14.4-8; Malachi 1.2, 11).

abs and their religion in the form of arguments ostensibly directed against the Jews.[6]

Before further discussion, it must be shown why these four texts can be dated to the middle third of the seventh century. The *Doctrina Jacobi* is the earliest. Its author purports to be a Christian convert from Judaism, and the text is presented as an eyewitness record of a dialogue that took place in Carthage in July 634 among members of a small community of Jews originally from the coastal town of Sykamina in Palestine, who had been forcibly baptized by the governor of Carthage. The protagonist is Jacob, forcibly baptized like the others but now convinced of the truth of Christianity. His chief antagonist, Justus, recently arrived from Palestine, has avoided forced baptism and is at first extremely hostile towards the Christian faith. Towards the end, however, Justus is won over by Jacob's arguments. Now an ardent believer, he prepares to return to a Palestine in the throes of the Arab conquest, to face martyrdom at the hands of the Arabs or the Jews. The supposed dialogue need not have taken place, but the details of the text convincingly reflect the preoccupations of Palestinian Jews during the momentous period between the decree of forced baptism in June 632 and the first phase of the Arab conquest of Palestine.[7] The most likely date of composition is late 634 or 635.

There is controversy over the date of the *Trophies of Damascus*. This text purports to record a dialogue between Christians and Jews that took place before a large public audience of Christians, Jews, pagans, and Arabs in Damascus, 'in the twentieth year of the emperor Constantine, our emperor after Constantine, in August of the ninth indiction-year'. The likely years are either 661, twentieth year of Constans II (641-68), whose regnal name was Constantine, or 681, twentieth year of his son Constantine IV (668-85)—assuming the likelihood that he was crowned co-emperor in 661.[8] The

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[6] Déroche, 'Polémique anti-judaïque et émergence de l'islam', pp. 142-6, rejects the argument made by David Olster that these texts aimed primarily against the Arabs and Islam behind the façade of anti-Jewish polemic.

[7] North Africa became the permanent home of many refugees from Syria, starting with the Persian invasion in 610; the forcible baptism of many thousands of Jews in North Africa is attested in a letter sent by Maximus Confessor from Carthage to the religious community he left behind in Palestine: Dagron and Déroche, 'Juifs et chrétiens', 31.

[8] *Maronite Chronicle*, 71, in A. Palmer, ed., *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chron-*

year 681 is preferred because it was a ninth indiction-year, whereas 661was not. However, source references to indiction-years are often inaccurate, especially in the case of authors originating outside the Empire.

One indication that the date refers to 661 is the statement in the *Trophies* that the Empire has been beset by wars for the last fifty years. A truce made between the Empire and the caliphate in 678 lasted until 692, so the implication that war is continuing seems incongruous if the text dates to 681.[9] On the other hand, the statement points back to the Persian invasion of Syria in 610. Although the last Roman-Persian war began in 602, operations were limited at first to the military frontier in Upper Mesopotamia. But the Persian crossing of the Euphrates in 610 really marked the start of the seventh-century upheaval in the East, the interval between the end of the Persian war and the start of the Arab conquests lasting a mere five years (629-33).

Furthermore, the historical context suggests that the supposed public dialogue recorded in the *Trophies* took place in 661 rather than 681. In 661, Muʿāwiya was firmly established as caliph, and he is known to have shown goodwill towards Syrian Christians at this time: the *Maronite Chronicle*, a Syriac work generally accepted as contemporary, records that in June AG970/659, Muʿāwiya presided over a theological dispute between Jacobites and Maronites, pronouncing in favour of the Maronites; in AG971/660-1, 'many Arabs gathered at Jerusalem and made Muʿāwiya king and he went up and sat down on Golgotha; he prayed there, and went to Gethsemane and went down to the tomb of the blessed Mary to pray in it.'[10] These events coincided with Muʿāwiya's victory against

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icles, Liverpool, 1993, p. 33: Constans left Constantinople in AG970/659 after placing his son Constantine on his throne.

[9] See n. 11 below. A truce between the Empire and Muʿāwiya, then governor of Syria, also existed during the period of the Arab civil war (656-61), but Muʿāwiya ended it once he had gained the caliphate in 660-1: Theophanes, *Chronographia*, AM6150/657-8, ed. C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, Oxford, 1997, p. 484. The breaking of the truce is recorded in *Maronite Chronicle*, p. 72.

[10] *Maronite Chronicle*, p. 70. This contemporary quotation implies much about the early cult and polity of the Arabs in Syria: *cf.* the statement by a Nestorian writer *c.*686 that under Muʿāwiya, 'the peace throughout the world was such that we have never heard [. . .]': S.P.Brock, 'North Mesopotamia in the seventh century: Book XV of John bar Penkāyē's Rīš Mellē', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 9, 1987, [pp. 51-75] p. 61.

the supporters of ʿAlī in the Arab civil war and his assumption of the caliphate. The circumstances seem to favour the idea of a public debate between Christians and Jews in Damascus. In 681, on the other hand, Muʿāwiya was recently dead and the Arab-Islamic state was beginning to disintegrate into civil war. After four years of fruitless campaigning (674-8), the Arab expedition against Constantinople had been annihilated; in the closing years of Muʿāwiya's rule (678-80), the Empire imposed the humiliating truce referred to above, by which the Arabs had to pay an onerous tribute of 1000 *solidi* per day.[11] Above all, during these same years, Christians in western Syria launched a Byzantine-backed uprising against Arab rule, the so-called Mardaïte revolt, which had initial success and was not suppressed until the early 690s.[12] Under such circumstances, the idea of a public Christian-Jewish debate in Damascus seems implausible. August 661 thus seems the more likely date of the supposed debate, so that the *Trophies of Damascus* was composed in the same year or the next.

The other two texts, *Disputatio Anastasii adversus Judaeos* and *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem*, are closely related to each other in content.[13] A period for their composition is suggested by a key common reference: both mention the survival of the Byzantine gold coinage, which displays the cross and the emperor, despite recent attempts by unnamed tyrants to abolish it. The only matching reference is a notice in the *Maronite Chronicle* for July 661 when Muʿāwiya was proclaimed 'king in all the villages and cities of his dominion [. . .] He also minted gold and silver, but it was not accepted, because it had no cross on it.'[14] The latest possible date of compilation for the *Disputatio* and *Quaestiones* is 696-7, when the Byzantine coinage was abolished by the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik.[15] But their emphatic reference to the failure of Muʿāwiya's coinage reform in 661 suggests that the event was recent. Finally, the close similarity

[11] Theophanes, AM6169/676-7, confirmed in AM6176/683-4.

[12] Ibid.; Michael the Syrian, *Chronicles*, XI.15, 446, ed. J.-B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche jacobite d'Antioche (1166-99)*, Brussels, 1963, p. 469.

[13] See n. 4.

[14] *Maronite Chronicle*, 71; *cf. Quaestiones*, q. 42, *Disputatio*, col. 1223.

[15] Kaegi discusses the date of the *Disputatio*; he suggests a date around 690, at least for the passage on the gold coinage, and probably also for the whole text except for a few minor interpolations (*Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, pp. 221-7).

of their arguments with those made in the *Trophies* indicates that the *Disputatio* and *Quaestiones* presuppose the same kind of formal Christian-Jewish dialogue for which the early 660s provides the best context.

The four texts appeared in the middle third of the seventh century in the Near East, among the generation that first experienced Arab rule yet could still recall the intense Christian-Jewish confrontation that flared in the East from soon after the murder of the emperor Maurice in 602 until the early Arab conquests in the 630s. Factional and confessional rioting raged throughout Syria from 608, and the Persians crossed the Euphrates in 610. The Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch and many great landowners residing in the city were reportedly murdered by the Jews during this chaotic period.[16] The Persians conquered Syria and Palestine, sacking Jerusalem in 614, and finding ready allies in the Jews. A tenth-century source reports a failed Jewish conspiracy to take Tyre about this time, and the contemporary account of Antiochius Strategius describes Jewish atrocities against Christian prisoners in Jerusalem.[17] The Christians feared that the Persians would permit restored Jewish worship on the Temple Mount, a profound threat to the doctrine of the Church as the new Israel. The Jewish *Poem of Qiliri*, probably written at this time, alludes to initial Persian sympathy for the Jews: a synagogue was apparently built on the Temple Mount.[18] However, Persian sentiment soon changed in favour of the Christians, a large majority in Syria, and the Jewish monument was dismantled. This account finds confirmation in a letter written by Modestus, *locum tenens* of the patriarchate, to the Armenian patriarch shortly after the sack of Jerusalem in May 614. Modestus describes the horror of the Persian sack of Jerusalem but ends rejoicing at the Persians' change of policy, which has permitted the rebuilding of Christian holy sites.[19]

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[16] Theophanes, AM6101/608-9; Michael the Syrian, II.379, 401. The contemporary *Chronicon Paschale* attributes this murder to soldiers in Sept. 610: Cameron, 'Byzantines and Jews', p. 256. On the factional riots, see Dagron and Déroche, 'Juifs et chrétiens', pp. 19-22.

[17] Eutychius, *PG* CXI, cols 1084-5; F. Conybeare, 'Antiochus Strategos' account of the sack of Jerusalem in A.D. 614', *English Historical Review* 25, 1910, pp. 503-17; Dagron and Déroche, 'Juifs et chrétiens', pp. 23-5.

[18] Ibid., 26-7.

[19] Sebeos, *History*, pp. 116-7, in R.W. Thomson, and J. Howard-Johnston, *The*

Byzantine counter-attack led to the collapse of Persia in 628. Soon afterwards, the victorious emperor Heraclius undertook a radical programme, which possibly aimed to establish a reunited and world-encompassing Church and Empire in preparation for the Parousia. In the context of such a vision, it seems, were Heraclius' efforts to restore communion with the Nestorian and Monophysite communities, and his seeming intention to establish a Christian ruler over defeated Persia.[20] But the keystone of the programme was the unprecedented decree of June 632, ordering all Jews in the Empire to be forcibly baptized. Contemporary evidence from the *Doctrina Jacobi* and Maximus Confessor's *Epistle VIII* confirms that the decree was enforced in North Africa. Writing from Carthage to Palestine in great trepidation for the future, Maximus Confessor records the baptism of 'thousands and thousands' of Jews there, both natives and refugees from the East.[21]

Unusual hostility between Christians and Jews in the East is plainly evident during the first half of the seventh century. Besides the four texts under discussion, a number of anti-Jewish works were probably written in the preceding generation 602-34, and Christians are known to have spent much effort in compiling *florilegia* for use against the Jews.[22] While no evidence survives to show that Jews did the same, Jewish apocalyptic texts appeared during the Persian

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Armenian History attributed to Sebeos, Liverpool, 1999, pp. 70-2. Two Jewish apocalypses probably dating from the Persian occupation 629-34, the *Apocalypse of Zorobabel* and the *Signs of the Messiah*, also reflect Christian-Jewish confrontation and sharpened Jewish messianic expectations; I. Lévi, 'L'apocalypse de Zorobabel et le roi de Perse Siroès', *Revue des Études Juives* 68, 1914, [pp. 129-60] p. 69; 1919, [pp. 108-21] p. 71; 1920, pp. 57-65; A. Marmorstein, 'Les signes du Messie', *Revue des Études Juives* 52, 1906, pp. 176-86. See also Déroche, 'Polémique anti-judaïque et émergence de l'islam', p 144.

[20] C. Mango, 'Deux études sur Byzance et la Perse sassanide', *Travaux et mémoires* 9, 1985, [pp. 91-117] p. 117. See also M.J. Higgins, 'Chosroes II's votive offerings at Sergiopolis', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 48, 1955, pp. 89-102, for evidence that Chosroes II, under the influence of his favourite wife Shirin, showed sympathy for the Christian religion.

[21] Quoted in Dagron and Déroche, 'Juifs et chrétiens', p. 31: see n. 7.

[22] Anti-Jewish works of this period may include *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo*, *Dialogue* of *Gregentius* (see n. 4), the *Apology against the Jews* of Leontius of Neapolis, and the Syriac *Disputation of Sergius the Stylite* (Déroche, 'La polémique anti-judaïque', pp. 278-80). John Moschus' *Pratum Spirituale* mentions a certain Cosmas of Alexandria, who dedicated his work to compiling texts for use against the Jews (ibid., p. 283). In his *Hodegos*, Anastasius of Sinai reports a debate he held with a Jew in Egypt (ibid., pp. 284-5); Cameron, 'Byzantines and Jews', p. 262.

occupation, and it is recorded that Arabs used Jewish rabbis to argue against Christians in the 640s.[23] At one level, then, these four texts may be seen as transparent polemical works directed against the Jews and reflecting the troubles of the preceding generation in which Jews and Judaism had played a central role. But they also reflect a new Christian and Jewish awareness of the third party that had suddenly introduced itself into their mutual dispute.

In the texts datable to the 660s—the *Trophies*, *Disputatio*, and *Quaestiones*—at least four areas of argument refer implicitly to the Arabs and early Islam in an ambiguous and implicit manner that could be understood by the sympathetic reader without the need for open affirmation, a delicate matter at best under the new conditions.[24]

The first argument appears in the distinction of Christians from Jews as regards the claim to Abrahamic ancestry and the legitimate authority it conferred:

> Why, O Jew, do you glorify in calling yourself the only seed of Abraham? For Ishmael was the first-born son of Abraham. You may think he was only a half-slave who was excluded from the line of descent; but the custom of Scripture is to draw the line of descent from the fathers, not from the mothers.[25]

The argument is aimed primarily at the Jews' claim to sole possession of truth and inheritance through physical descent from Abraham. But it also shows awareness of the Arabs' own claims through Ishmael the first-born son, besides implicitly advancing the Christian position that, in the deepest sense, Abrahamic descent is spiritual: the promised 'great nation', at first the progeny of Sarah, ends in the church, the spiritual assembly of the nations in Christ.

The second argument defends against specific accusations of idolatry leveled by Jews but also by unspecified 'gentiles', 'infidels', and 'pagans' who, in the context of these texts, must have been Arabs.

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[23] F. Nau, 'Un colloque du patriarche Jean avec l'émir des agaréens et faits divers des années 712 à 716', *Journal Asiatique* 11e série, 5, 1915, pp. 225-79. For the Jewish apocalypses, see n. 19.

[24] In passing, this suggests that Christians under the domination of early Islam lived in a state of insecurity *de facto*—which throws light on the content and function of early conquest treaties and their juridical elaboration in the Conditions of 'Umar: the topic is widely discussed in A. Noth, 'Abgrenzungsprobleme zwischen Muslimen und nicht-Muslimen', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 9, 1987, pp. 290-315.

[25] *Disputatio*, 1255.

Christians are not idolaters when they honour the cross, for they do this only in memory of Christ. But Christ sat on a donkey: why, ask the Jews and 'gentiles', do the Christians not venerate donkeys? In answer, Christ did not conquer Satan and bring salvation through the donkey but through the cross, the only object that the demons fear. But why do the Christians not also make images of the lance, the reed, and the sponge? Again, the cross is simply a figure made from two pieces of wood:

> If any infidel wishes to prove that we worship the image of the cross, we need only separate the pieces to dissolve the image. Then the infidels will be persuaded that we do not venerate wood, but the figure of the cross. But we cannot do likewise in the case of the lance, the reed, or the sponge.[26]

The Christian disputant in the *Trophies* declares that Jews and 'pagans' wrongly accuse the Christians of adoring the sun when they pray towards the east. In answer to this, the Jews should be referred to their own scriptures: 'The feet of the Lord will stand on the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem.'[27] The answer to the 'pagans' is that when Christians pray towards the sunrise, the created light, they adore God, who is true light—an assertion of Christian monotheism and possibly an allusion to the qur'anic concept of God as light.

Similarly, the Jew in the *Trophies* claims that pork is impure. 'You blaspheme', the Christian says, 'for everything that God made is completely good'.[28] He argues intriguingly that God forbade the Jews to eat pork simply as a means of preventing them from falling back into the idolatry they had known in Egypt, for pork was the only meat that the Egyptians ate, other animals being regarded by them as sacred. The author of the *Disputatio* adds engagingly that all animals are useful, but pigs are only useful for eating.[29] The argument's emphasis on pork corresponds to the Islamic prohibition

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[26] *Quaestiones*, q. 40-1.

[27] Zach 14.4 *Trophies*, p. 252, *cf. Quaestiones*, q. 37. The Christian also asks why the Jews pray to the south. Although the Jew responds with a scriptural quote (Hab 3.3: 'God will come from Teman', i.e. 'from the south'), there may be a reference to the custom of Arabs in Syria; Déroche, 'Polémique anti-judaïque et émergence de l'islam', pp. 156-7).

[28] *Trophies*, p. 248.

[29] *Disputatio*, 1274.

of pork alone, in contrast to the wide range of foods forbidden to Jews.

The third argument is not anti-Jewish at all, but appears to aim at the scriptural revelation evidently possessed by the Arabs and known to Christians at that early date. In a direct attack on the qur'anic idea of heavenly paradise, the author of the *Quaestiones* asks, 'Where is the true paradise? Those who say it is in heaven are wrong because Scripture says, "God planted paradise in Eden to the east"' (Gen 2.8). And that is the true reason why Christians pray eastwards: because there is to be found the Garden of Eden and earthly paradise, the original home of man.[30] Based on scripture, this argument seems intended to inform Christians who had been confused by Arab assertions about the location of paradise.

A more indirect argument against Arab revelation is seen in the *Trophies*, where the Christian responds to the Jewish challenge: 'Why do the evangelists differ from each other?' They do not differ in any important matter, the Christian replies, and besides, a single Gospel would have been suspect of fabrication:

> If they had all said the same thing, the Greeks could then have said along with you that the evangelists had all met one day to deceive the world by common agreement. Their partial differences show that each of them said what he knew.[31]

This argument is a valid response to the Jews, but in the context of the early 660s it may imply critical reference to the Arabs: the Arab historical tradition records that the Caliph 'Uthmān ordered a common recension of the Qur'an and the destruction of all variant texts, an unpopular action invoked as a reason for his murder by dissidents in 656.[32]

Again, the Jews in the *Trophies* ask why the prophets did not speak clearly about Christ. The reply is that God did not want to tell the prophets clearly in case the Jews should kill them. In other words, the Jewish prophets spoke obscurely about Christ so that their prophecies would be preserved in writing as witness for posterity. The argument is a valid response to the Jews' refusal to accept the evidence of their

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[30] *Quaestiones*, q. 47.
[31] *Trophies*, p. 258.
[32] M. Hinds, 'The murder of the caliph 'Uthmân', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3, 1972, [pp. 450-69] p. 458.

own scriptures in debate with Christians. But there may also be an implied reference to Arabs in the rhetorical question: 'For when we dispute with you [Jews] using your own scriptures and yet we cannot convince you, how would you respond if we disputed with you without the Scriptures?'[33] Regarding the Jews, the question is merely hypothetical; regarding the Arabs, it indicates the likelihood that they rejected the validity of Jewish and Christian scriptures and refused them as evidence in debate.

Earlier anti-Jewish polemic had insisted on the Church's victory over the persecutions and the subsequent conversion of the Roman Empire as a sign of God's special favour for the Christian religion over all others. The argument was supported by the contrasting history of Jewish misfortune since the time of Christ, marked by the destruction of their Temple and city and their scattering among the nations. However, the force of this argument was weakened by later developments. Large Christian communities in the east broke away from the Church in the late fifth and early sixth centuries, and by the end of the sixth century it was apparent that these schisms were permanent. Much more, the Arab conquests raised up a new force characterized by the total fusion of religion and state and essential hostility towards the Christian religion, manifested in part by relentless aggression against the Christian Empire. After capturing the Empire's richest provinces, Syria and Egypt, the Arabs threatened to overrun its remaining territory and, according to contemporary evidence, had attacked its capital Constantinople by land and sea as early as 654.[34] Yet, the assault ended in disaster, which probably lay behind the temporary collapse of the new Arab state into civil war (656-61). The Empire gained a temporary respite, but it was too weak to recover lost territory and by the mid-660s, the reunited Arabs were again on the offensive, invading Asia Minor, North Africa, and Sicily. The three texts datable to this period are fully aware that the Christian Empire was in peril, having suffered grievous blows, and that the Christian religion had been subjugated in many lands where it had formerly enjoyed supremacy. Jews could now confidently question the idea that God's favour for the Chris-

[33] *Trophies*, p. 255, cf. *Disputatio*, 1231.

[34] S. O'Sullivan, 'Sebeos' account of an Arab attack on Constantinople in 654', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 28, 2004, [pp. 67-88] n. 58.

tians was demonstrated in history. Arabs too would be especially inclined to pose this question, claiming instead that their own sudden rise demonstrated God's favour towards them.

How Christians responded is seen in the fourth Arab-related argument developed by these texts. In the *Trophies*, the Jew points out that the Christians are engulfed in wars; their lands have been devastated and great numbers of them made prisoner. But according to the prophets Isaiah and Micah, there will be peace on earth when the Messiah comes. Therefore, Jesus Christ cannot be the expected Messiah. The Christian replies that the double question requires a double answer. First, when speaking about future peace, the prophets meant that most men would abandon idolatry and know the true God. Secondly, the Christian Empire had in fact long been at peace; the present wars had only been going on for fifty years; but most of all, the Empire and the Church had survived.[35] The author of the *Disputatio* echoes:

> How many gentiles and rulers and peoples filled with the worst errors have attacked our faith and not been able to extinguish it? [. . .] The empire of the Romans, that is the Christians, will last until the end of the world; for Christ, king of kings, will use that empire to pasture his people until his second coming, and it will be handed over to no other people.[36]

Coming more appropriately from doubting Christians is the question: 'How can we know that the Christian faith is superior to all others under heaven? For every faith thinks itself to be more pious than the others.' In reply, God's special care for the Christians is indicated by the fact that no people except the Christians has been so long attacked by all other peoples and survived, nor have the barbarians ever killed a Christian emperor.[37] 'So long as the capital and the

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[35] *Trophies*, pp. 220-1.

[36] *Disputatio*, 1211.

[37] *Quaestiones*, q. 42, *Disputatio*, 1222. The persecutions under the pagan Empire are probably not in the author's mind because Christians and Romans are now closely identified: the author is referring to the continuous assault against the Empire by barbarians from all sides—Avars, Slavs, Persians, and Arabs. Elsewhere, this assault is specified as having lasted for fifty years, that is, from the Persian crossing of the Euphrates in 610. The death of Phocas in that year also marked the collapse of Byzantine power in the Balkans. The writer may be unaware that the emperor Valens was killed by the Visigoths at the battle of Adrianople in 378; on the other hand, this event was well chronicled, and the Visigoths had previously adopted Arian Christianity: in the

empire remain firm, the whole body can easily renew itself.'[38]

The same argument of survival is put differently when the Christian in the *Trophies* insists that God, having called men from impiety to piety, would never abandon them again. Why, then, would he have called them in the first place? Likewise, the *Quaestiones* asserts: 'God may not permit a false faith to dominate to the ends of the earth after the Incarnation of his Son, our Lord and God Jesus Christ.' And the *Disputatio* affirms that God allowed false faith to dominate the earth only formerly, when it was the time for Christ to come in the flesh.[39] All concur that almighty God, having established the Christian faith, is bound by his own action and promise to prevent it from falling. The argument stresses the certain survival of the Christian faith against the new force of Arab Islam.

Turning from Christian defeats and the threat of barbarian conquest to the related problem of divisions among Christians, the imagined opponent in the *Quaestiones* asks, 'Why has no other faith on earth except the Christian been divided by Satan into so many heresies?' The point must have exercised the minds of Christians and was probably used against them by Arabs; indeed, the inability of the Christians to agree among themselves is emphasized in the Qur'an. But the Christian disputant turns the point around:

> Do you think Satan has any interest in attacking the Jews, the Samaritans, or the gentiles or in splitting them up into different heresies? For these belong to him, and Satan never fights what is his, but only what is God's. Therefore, anyone can understand that no other pious faith exists on earth except that by which we believe in Christ.[40]

As mentioned above, Muʿāwiya presided over a public debate between Maronites and Jacobites in the early 660s. This event is recalled in the next question: how can we convince the rude and barbarian man that the Catholic Church is superior to heresies? Barbarians cannot understand Catholic doctrine, the argument goes, but they may be convinced by the fact that, just as an emperor entrusts his most precious treasures to his most faithful servants, so God has entrusted the most sacred Christian places to the Catholic Church.

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mind of the author, the term 'barbarian' is a synonym for non-Christian.

[38] *Trophies*, p. 221.

[39] Ibid., p. 256; *Quaestiones*, q.42; *Disputatio*, 1223

[40] *Quaestiones*, q. 43.

'If our opponent replies that we only possess these places by tyrannical power [the Arabs confirmed existing possession of Christian sanctuaries at the time of the conquest, and the Palestinian holy places were all in Chalcedonian hands], let him understand that even though barbarians have often occupied Palestine, Christ has never entrusted his holy places to heretics.'[41]

Moving from argument to assertion, the three texts speak directly against two fundamental doctrines of Islam. The first is the claim to possess a new prophet. In order to demonstrate that Christ is the Messiah, all three texts ask, 'Has there been another prophet among the Jews since John?' and the *Quaestiones* responds emphatically, 'None whatsoever'.[42] This point has little force against the Jews, who had rejected John the Baptist and whose last recognized prophets had appeared long before Christ. Its reference is more likely to early Islam, and the qualifying phrase 'among the Jews', inserted as a protective measure, provides a good example of the literary circumspection required by the new circumstances.

The second doctrine is the denial of Christ's divinity. The Christian in the *Trophies* quotes, 'He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father' (John 5.23), adding that 'any faith that does not honour Christ as the Son of God is vain.'[43] Certainly, Judaism falls into this category, but the phrase 'any faith' is used because the assertion also refers to early Islam, as the following makes clear:

> Christ said, 'You who believe in me will be hated by all because of my name' (Matt. 10.22). Now, you Jews, tell us why you hate us. Is it not because of the name of Christ? And as for all those who make war on us, do they hate us for any other reason?[44]

Besides their overt anti-Jewish purpose, these three texts datable to the 660s are early examples of Christian polemic against the new political and religious force that the Arabs had brought: the state whose essential purpose was conquest of the Christian Empire—and, inseparably, the religion that claimed Abrahamic descent, revealed scripture, and prophecy, but whose essential doctrine (corresponding to the essential purpose of the new state) was the denial of Christ's divinity. Yet despite the troubles now besetting it on earth,

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[41] Ibid., q. 44.
[42] *Trophies*, p. 271; *Disputatio*, 1219; *Quaestiones*, q. 137, response 3.
[43] *Trophies*,p. 274.
[44] Ibid., p. 271.

the Christian faith remains superior to its foes, both old and new, and therefore it can always vanquish them in reasoning debate:

> This discourse is addressed not only to the Jews, but also to the intelligence of all unbelievers since, for those who disbelieve in Christ because of the future [i.e. who think that Christ is refuted by the expected course of future history], the future must be confirmed by the events of each day. Let the Jew come, let the Samaritan come, let the Greek come. Let them believe or let them be confounded.[45]

The *Doctrina Jacobi*, written in 634 or 635, shows further that Christians were aware of the new force almost at its outset. However, appearing too early to permit a concealed polemic against early Islam, the *Doctrina* remains focused throughout on the Jews. It argues from the Old Testament that Jesus Christ is the Messiah awaited by the Jews, but this traditional approach is transformed towards the end of the text. There, the current political revolution is given an apocalyptic interpretation that includes the earliest Christian literary reference to Islam. In this, the *Doctrina* reflects what contemporary Christians and Jews understood from the book of Daniel, though with opposite conclusions drawn. Rome was the last in the series of four world kingdoms, and she would be followed by times of confusion ending in the coming of the Son of Man, the Messiah. Even more, the end of Rome was now imminent as the Arab invasion of Palestine marked the culmination of unceasing barbarian attacks: 'all peoples were subjected to the Romans by divine decree; but now we see Romania humiliated.'[46]

For Christians in 634, the times of confusion apparently now beginning would end at an unknown date with the Son of Man's return, as Jesus had told the Jewish high-priest during his trial.[47] But Jewish anticipation of the Messiah was sharper and more pressing. As indicated by their apocalyptic texts of the period, Jews connected Daniel's times of confusion with the Emperor Heraclius' forced

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[45] Ibid., p. 270.

[46] *Doctrina* III.10.

[47] Mark 14.61-2; Matt 26.63-4; Luke 22.66-71. The collapse of the Empire's arch-foe, Persia, the prospect of its conversion (see n. 20), and the forcible baptism of the Jews in 632 indicate that eastern Christians thought the times of confusion were drawing to an end and the Second Coming was approaching. The Jews will be converted in the last times, once all the gentiles have come in: Rom 11.25. With the irruption of the Arabs, it became clear that Christians had been seeing a false dawn, yet the Jews also misinterpreted this event as their deliverance from Heraclius and the Romans.

baptism in the manner of the persecutor Antiochus Epiphanes. Identifying Heraclius with the little horn, the apocalyptic figure of wickedness prophesied by Daniel, they regarded the coming of their awaited Messiah as imminent. The Messiah would be heralded by a figure similar to Elijah, the prophet who had lived in the desert and restored worship of the one God. Jews identified this figure with a prophet suddenly arisen among the pagan Arabs whom they regarded as their kin by descent from Abraham.[48]

The book of Daniel predicts that the time of confusion will last for 'a time, times, and half a time', which is most literally interpreted as three and a half years. If this period began with Heraclius' persecution of the Jews in early 632, then it must end in 636. With this interpretation of Daniel in mind, Jews saw the Arab invasion of Palestine in the winter of 633-4 as an act of divine redemption. This sense of Jewish anticipation at the very start of the Arab conquest is recorded towards the end of the *Doctrina Jacobi*, where Justus, the Jewish opponent of Jacob, reports a letter he had just received from his brother Abraham in Palestine. It was written just after the Arabs had killed the *candidatus*, a reference to the first defeat inflicted by the Arabs on imperial forces, fought near Gaza on 4 February, 634. The *candidatus* was probably the military commander (*dux*) of Palestine, and sources record that his force of three hundred men was annihilated:[49]

> When the *candidatus* was killed by the Saracens, I was at Caesarea', Abraham told me, 'and I went by boat to Sykamina. They were saying, "The candidatus has been killed!" And we Jews were in great joy. They said that the prophet had appeared and was coming with the Saracens, and that he would proclaim the arrival of the Christ Messiah who was to come.

In what follows, however, the *Doctrina* records Jewish disillusionment with the Saracen prophet, which came soon after the start of the Arab conquest:

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[48] Malachi 3.23. Jewish relations with the Arabs at this time are attested by the contemporary Sebeos (*History*, pp. 134, 139 (see n. 19)).

[49] Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, pp. 88-94: in the early seventh century, the office of *candidatus* was a widely distributed honour, whose holders had direct access to the emperor Heraclius. The battle is named by Arab sources as Dāthin, a village of the Gaza district. There are parallel references in Theophanes' *Chronographia* AM6124/631-2, and Nicephorus' *Short History*, 20, ed. C. Mango, *Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople: Short History*, Washington DC, 1990, p. 67. See n. 51 below.

> 'When I arrived at Sykamina, I went to an old man very learned in the Scriptures and asked him, "What do you say about the prophet who has appeared among the Saracens?" And he replied, groaning deeply: "He is false, for surely the prophets do not come armed to the teeth! Truly, these recent events are works of confusion, and I fear that the first Christ who has already come, whom the Christians worship, was really the one sent by God . . . Isaiah said that the Jews would have a perverted and hardened heart until the entire earth was devastated. But go now, Abraham, and learn about the prophet who has come." And after inquiry, I, Abraham, learned from those who had met him that you will find nothing genuine in the supposed prophet, unless it be the shedding of man's blood. Moreover, he claims to hold the keys to heaven, which is incredible.' This is what my brother Abraham wrote to me from the East. And I, Justus, believe in Christ born of the holy Mary. I believe that he is the one whom God most high sent to the earth, the saviour and king of Israel.[50]

If the initial Arab invasion and victory raised Jewish messianic hopes to fever point, it seems they were soon dashed by the indiscriminate destructiveness of the Arab conquest in Palestine and Syria. This destructiveness is corroborated by up to a dozen contemporary Christian sources, of which two deserve to be quoted because they relate to the passage in the *Doctrina*.[51] The Syriac source for the fateful battle near Gaza states:

> On Friday, 4 February [634], at the ninth hour, there was a battle between the Romans and the Arabs of Muḥammad in Palestine twelve miles east of Gaza. The Romans fled, leaving behind the *patrikios* the

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[50] *Doctrina* V.16. The views expressed here about the Prophet do not represent the views of the author of this article. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, AM6122/629-30, describes the rise of Muḥammad and states: 'At the beginning of his advent the misguided Jews thought he was the Messiah who is awaited by them'. He continues with a story of ten Jews who joined Muḥammad, which probably derives from a Jewish legend of the eighth century; see R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, Princeton NJ, 1997, pp. 505-9.

[51] The contemporary sources are discussed and quoted in W. Kaegi, 'Initial Byzantine reactions to the Arab conquest', *Church History* 38, 1969, pp. 318-25; D. Constantelos, 'The Moslem conquests of the Near East as revealed in the Greek sources of the seventh and eighth centuries', *Byzantion* 42, 1972, pp. 325-57; and Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, *passim*. Apart from the *Doctrina Jacobi* (c. 634), *Chronicle 724* (c. 640), and the Syriac fragment (c. 637), all quoted above, they include the *Histories* of Sebeos (c. 660) and John of Nikiu (c. 640-70), the *Khuzistan Chronicle* (c. 660-70), the *Chronicle of Fredegar* (c. 658), Maximus Confessor's *Letter 14* (c. 640), two sermons of Sophronius (635-7) and probably also the early apocalypses of pseudo-Ephraem and pseudo-Methodius (see nn. 34 and 58).

> son of YRDN, whom the Arabs killed. Some forty thousand [so the original edition, but the more recently published English translation reads '4000' without comment] poor village people of Palestine were killed there, Christians, Jews, and Samaritans. The Arabs ravaged the whole region.[52]

And a fragmentary 25-line Syriac note written soon after the battle of Gabitha (probably identical to the Yarmuk battle) on 20 August, 636, reports for the previous year:

> (line 8). . . and in January (635) [the people of?] Emesa took the word for their lives, and many villages were ruined with killing by [the Arabs of] Muḥammad and a great number of people were killed and captives [were taken] from Galilee as far as Bēth . . . and those Arabs pitched camp beside . . . and we saw everywhere . . . and olive oil which they brought and . . . them (line 14).[53]

In 634, Christians and Jews understood that the Arab invasion then taking place manifested a new political and religious movement centred upon an Arab prophet. Filled with a mood of expectation prompted by the apparent collapse of Rome before barbarian invasions, both Christians and Jews gave apocalyptic significance to the new movement. However, the Jews had misinterpreted the significance of these events. Heraclius was not the figure of wickedness, the new Saracen prophet had not arisen to deliver the Jews from Heraclius, nor was he the herald of the imminent Messiah. The Messiah had already come, and if Rome was indeed falling, then only 'works of confusion' could follow before the Messiah's return at an unknown future date.

This is the *Doctrina Jacobi*'s clinching argument for the truth of the Christian faith—re-interpreting the significance of current events

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[52] Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, pp. 18-19. Except for a short appendix, *Chronicle 724* was probably compiled in 640. The original edition of this text, *Chronicon ad annum 724*, ed. E.W. Brooks and J.-B. Chabot, *Chronica minora* II (*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 3, *Scr. Syri* 3), Louvain, 1904, p. 114, reads: *Ibi occisi sunt quasi* quadraginta *milia rusticorum pauperum e Palestina: christiani, iudaei et samaritani. Et vastaverunt Arabes universam regionem*. The portrayal of the early Arab conquests as relatively benign, which arose as early as Voltaire's *Essai sur les moeurs* (1756), is now common currency. The contemporary Christian sources that attest to the contrary have received considerably less attention than they deserve.

[53] Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, pp. 2-3. The two Syriac texts and the passage in the *Doctrina* might imply that the prophet is still alive in 634-6—a cardinal point upon which Patricia Crone and Michael Cook base their radical criticism of the Arabic historical tradition in *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World*, Cambridge, 1977.

(agreed by all to be apocalyptic) and demonstrates to the Jews that their own interpretation is in error. When the Jewish antagonist Justus accepts the argument, he recalls what he had heard in Palestine, in 602, the year of the bloody revolution in Constantinople that initiated the Empire's slide into calamity:

> We were at Sykamina below the house of the lord Marianos, when our Jewish elder explained to us: 'Why are the Jews rejoicing at the death of the emperor Maurice and the coming of Phocas in blood? For if the fourth kingdom, Romania, is reduced, torn apart, and crushed as Daniel says, then truly nothing else can come except the ten horns of the fourth beast, and then the little horn that destroys all knowledge of God, and soon afterwards, the end of the world and resurrection of the dead. And if that happens, we Jews shall have been in error in not receiving the Christ who came [. . .] And the Jews of Sykamina who were there mocked the elder, saying he was talking nonsense . . . '[54]

To conclude, it has been argued that Islam was finally formed into a unified state and religion during the rule of ʿAbd al-Malik (685-705). This caliph made Arabic the official administrative language, established a new epigraphic coinage reflecting Islamic opposition to images, and built the Dome of the Rock, whose inscriptions deny the Trinity and Incarnation and proclaim the superiority of Islam over the Christian faith. After defeating his rivals, ʿAbd al-Malik destroyed and rebuilt the Meccan Kaʿba, and established direct rule for the first time over Iraq and the East. Finally, it is also argued that ʿAbd al-Malik, following ʿUthmān, established the final recension of the Qur'an and was the first ruler to encourage the written compilation of oral traditions.[55]

However that may be, these four anti-Jewish texts show early awareness of Islam as a new political and religious force whose essential features were in place well before 660. Altogether, they identify prophecy, Abrahamic descent, revelation, and denial of Christ's divinity as elements of the new religion—the same elements as are described in the Armenian Monophysite history attributed to Sebeos and dated c. 660.[56] Secondly, all these texts, even the very

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[54] *Doctrina* III.12.

[55] M. Sharon, 'The Umayyads as Ahl al-Bayt', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 14, 1991, [pp. 114-52] pp. 130-5; G. Reinink, 'The beginnings of Syriac apologetic literature in response to Islam', *Oriens Christianus* 77, 1993, pp. 165-87.

[56] See n. 19. Prophecy, Abrahamic descent, and revelation are included in Sebeos' description of Muḥammad (135). Denial of Christ's divinity is the condition demand-

early *Doctrina*, connect the new religion closely with the new Arab state that was and dedicated to the destruction of the Christian Empire. Finally, the *Doctrina* places the new force within an apocalyptic scheme, belonging to the times of confusion that intervene between the fall of Rome and the return of Christ. The three later texts also speak less urgently and more optimistically in insisting on the Empire's invincibility. But the apocalyptic idea remains in the *Disputatio*'s prophecy that: 'The empire of the Romans, that is the Christians, will last until the end of the world [. . .] and it will be handed over to no other people'.[57]

These words are echoed very closely in the earliest and greatest example of Eastern Christian apocalyptic literature, the *Apocalypse of pseudo-Methodios*, a work that is generally dated 691-692 and seen as reacting to the construction of the Dome of the Rock. Yet, in view of its topical relation with the anti-Jewish texts and Sebeos' *History*, it is worth considering alternatively that *pseudo-Methodios* appeared a generation earlier. In that case, the prophecy that the empire would last until the end of the world, which appears in both *pseudo-Methodios* and the anti-Jewish texts, perhaps came in response to the failure of the Arab attack against Constantinople in 654.[58]

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ed by the Arab king (the caliph 'Uthmān) in his letter to Constans (169). The letter is probably spurious, but the text indicates the contemporary author's understanding of this essential doctrine of Islam.

[57] *Disputatio*, 1211 (see n. 36). The apocalyptic view is also stated by their contemporary Sebeos. Contrary to the traditional historical interpretation, however, Sebeos, *History*, p. 142, sees Daniel's four-kingdom scheme according to the four points of the compass, in which the fourth kingdom is the kingdom of the south, 'which shall be greater than all kingdoms, and it will consume the whole earth.'

[58] See n. 34. The editor of the Greek versions considers that the apocalypse was originally compiled c. 655; A. Lolos, *Die Apokalypse des Ps.-Methodiosi*, Meisenheim am Glan, 1976; *Die dritte und vierte Redaktion des Ps.-Methodiosi*, Meisenheim am Glan, 1978. The argument for the date 691-2 and the close connection with Jerusalem is presented in G. Reinink, 'The Romance of Julian the Apostate as a source for seventh-century apocalypses', in P. Canivet, and J.-P. Rey-Coquais, eds, *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam: VIIe-VIIIe siècles*, Damascus, 1992, [pp. 75-86] pp. 79-80; idem, 'Ps.-Methodius: a concept of history in response to the rise of Islam', in A. Cameron, L. Conrad and G. King, eds, *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, Princeton NJ, 1992, vol. I, [pp. 149-87] pp. 181-6.

THE USE OF BIBLICAL QUOTATIONS IN CHRISTIAN APOCALYPTIC WRITINGS OF THE UMAYYAD PERIOD

HARALD SUERMANN

Introduction

In the early period of Muslim rule new Christian apocalyptic writings appeared which placed the recent history of the Arabic conquest within a larger scheme of history. According to this, the course of history was largely pre-determined, and it was possible not only to identify its current phase but also to ascertain the meaning of current events. Apocalyptic writings were a means of interpreting events that changed the world drastically, such as the Islamic conquest of a large part of the Roman and Persian empires.

The imperial ideology of the Roman Empire and of its emperor, as well as the history given in the Old Testament, were two major elements of this larger scheme of history. Biblical quotations, mainly from the Old Testament, are used in the apocalyptic writings in order to compare biblical figures and events with current persons and events. In this chapter I analyse the use of biblical quotations in apocalyptic and related writings of the Umayyad period.

The texts

1. *Western Syriac texts*

The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodios

The *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodios* was originally written in northern Mesopotamia around the year 691. It narrates the history from Adam until the Arab conquest as the beginning of the end of the world. It is a political apocalypse and charts the succession of empires, with the Roman Empire in main focus as the last empire of the world before the Antichrist appears. Many motifs from the political ideology of the Roman Empire are used. The main sources for the Apocalypse are Syrian writings such as the *Cave of Treasures*, the *Julian-Novel* and the

Song of Alexander.[1] According to the author, the world will last seven millennia and in the seventh the Arabs will rule. It is without doubt the most successful apocalyptic writing, in that a few years after its appearance there were already different Syriac recensions and Latin and Greek translations. It influenced many later writings.[2] The author is unknown, and we do not even know his denomination. He could be Monophysite, Chalcedonian or Nestorian. There is nothing in the Apocalypse to indicate his outlook.[3]

The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ephraem

The *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ephraem* is much shorter then the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodios* and it deals only with the last time. The *Apocalypse* as we now have it is composite, with Chapters 3 and 4 on the Arab invasion interpolated. The original is probably from the fourth century. Chapters 3 and 4 have no relation to the following chapters and there is no reference there to these two chapters on the Arab invasion. The exact date of the interpolation is unknown but it must have been in the second half of the seventh century. We do not know whether the author is Chalcedonian, Monophysite or Nestorian.[4]

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[1] Su-min Ri, ed. and trans., *La caverne des trésors. les deux recensions syriaques* (*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 487-8), Louvain, 1987; H. Gollancz, *Julian the Apostate: now translated for the first time from the Syriac original (the only known MS. in the British Museum, edited by Hoffmann of Kiel)*, Oxford and London, 1928; G.J. Reinink, ed. and trans., *Das syrische Alexanderlied: die drei Rezensionen* (*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 454-5), Louvain, 1983.

[2] G.J. Reinink, ed. and trans., *Die syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius* (*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 540-1), Louvain, 1993 (in the following we refer to this work as *PM* followed by a Roman number to indicate the chapter and an Arabic number to indicate the paragraph); W.J. Aerts and G.A.A. Kortekaas, eds, *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius. Die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen* (*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 569-70), Louvain, 1998; H. Suermann, *Die geschichtstheologische Reaktion auf die einfallenden Muslime in der edessenischen Apokalyptik des 7. Jahrhunderts* (*Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe XXIII Theologie* 256), Frankfurt/M., 1985; F.J. Martinez, *Eastern Christian Apocalyptic in the Early Muslim Period: Pseudo-Methodius and Pseudo-Athanasius*, Washington DC, 1985; H. Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit. Entstehung, Wandel und Wirkung einer tausendjährigen Weissagung*, Stuttgart, 2000; G. Reinink, 'Pseudo-Methodius and the Pseudo-Ephremian "Sermo de Fine Mundi"', in R.I.A. Nip *et al.*, eds, *Media latinitas: A Collection of Essays to Mark the Retirement of L.J. Engels* (*Instrumenta Patristica* 28), Steenbrugis, 1996, pp. 317-21; W. Witakowski, 'The eschatological program of the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodios: does it make sense?', *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 53, 2000, pp. 33-42.

[3] Reinink, *Die syrische Apokalypse*, p. VII.

[4] Suermann, *Geschichtstheologische Reaktion*, *passim*, text and translation pp. 12-33 (in

The Apocalypse of Pseudo-John

This *Apocalypse* is part of *The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles together with the Apocalypses of Each*. The different parts of this work derive from different periods, though the *Apocalypse* was most probably written around 670. The codex which contains the *Apocalypse* also contains excerpts from the anti-Nestorian writings of Severus, which may be an indication that the author of our *Apocalypse* was a Monophysite.

The *Apocalypse* starts with the conversion of Constantine. It relates the Persian conquest and inserts between Persian and Arab rule an empire of Media. It narrates the Arab conquest up to the point at which the Arabs are divided into two parties, and the king of the North ousts the king of the South to his place of origin. The rest follows the traditional apocalyptic scenario.[5]

2. *Eastern Syriac texts*

Rīš Mellē—*World History of John bar Penkāyē*

This summary of world history written by John bar Penkāyē in the late 680s is addressed to a certain Sabrīšōʿ, who could be the abbot of the monastery of John of Kamul where John bar Penkāyē had been a monk.[6] We do not know much about the author, although it seems that he died between 684 and 686 and was Nestorian. The aim of this world history from Adam and Eve to Muḥammad is to show how God educates fallen and sinful mankind through his divine care. At the centre of the work is the story of Jesus Christ and the twelve Apostles,

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the following we refer to this work as *PE* followed by the line of the translation); G. Reinink, 'Pseudo-Methodius'; *idem*, 'Pseudo-Ephraems «Rede über das Ende» und die syrische eschatologische Literatur des siebten Jahrhunderts', *Aram* 5, 1993, pp. 437-63.

[5] Suermann, *Geschichtstheologische Reaktion*, *passim*, text and translation pp. 98-109 (in the following we refer to this work as *PJ* followed by the line of the translation); H.J.W. Drijvers, 'The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles; a Syriac Apocalypse from the early Islamic period', in A. Cameron and L.I. Conrad, eds, *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, I. Problems in the Literary Source Material*, Princeton NJ, 1992, pp. 189-213; H.J.W. Drijvers, 'Christians, Jews and Muslims in Northern Mesopotamia in early Islamic times: the Gospel of the Twelve Apostles and related texts', in P. Canivet and J.-P. Rey-Coquais, eds, *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam VII^e-VIII^e siècles*, Damascus, 1992, pp. 67-74.

[6] On the monastery, see J.M. Fiey, *Nisibe: métropole syriaque orientale* (*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 388), Louvain, 1977, pp. 199-200.

an episode which is completely unmentioned in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodios*.[7]

3. *Coptic texts*

Apocalypse of Pseudo-Athanasius

The *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Athanasius* has stronger characteristics of a homily than the other apocalypses, but it also has the clear character of an apocalypse. It is a combination of both. It calls for the celebration of the feast of the archangel Michael and it has many direct addresses to the audience. It starts with the condemnation of the Arians, but its main part is the request for priests and monks to live lives acceptable to God, because their sins have led to God sending a barbaric people. These are the Saracens. This is the part which will receive our attention.[8]

The text was written between 725 and 750. If the person with the number 666 indicates the Caliph Marwān II (744-50), then it must have been written just before the fall of the Umayyad dynasty.[9]

The text was certainly written in Egypt because it says that only

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[7] A. Mingana, *Sources Syriaques*, vol. I, *Mšiḥā zkhā*, Leipzig, 1908, pp. 1*-171*; S.P. Brock, 'North Mesopotamia in the late seventh century: Book XV of John bar Penkāyē's Rīš Mellē', in idem, *Studies in Syriac Christianity*, Aldershot, Hampshire, 1992, no. II, pp. 51-75 (in the following we refer to this work as *JbP* followed by a number with an asterix which refers to the page of Mingana's edition and is indicated in Brock's translation); P. Bruns, 'Von Adam und Eva bis Mohammed—Beobachtungen zur syrischen Chronik des Johannes bar Penkāyē', *Oriens Christianus* 87, 2003, pp. 47-64; H. Kaufhold, 'Anmerkungen zur Textüberlieferung der Chronik des Johannes bar Penkāyē', *Oriens Christianus* 87, 2003, pp. 65-79.

[8] B. Witte, 'Der koptische Text von M602 f.52-f.77 der Pierpont Morgan Library—wirklich eine Schrift des Athanasius?', *Oriens Christianus* 78, 1994, pp. 123-30; F.J. Martinez, 'The King of Rūm and the King of Ethiopia in medieval apocalyptic texts from Egypt', in W. Godlewski, ed., *Coptic Studies. Acts of the Third International Congress of Coptic Studies 1984*, Varsovie, 1990, pp. 247-59; F.J. Martinez, *Eastern Christian Apocalyptic*, pp. 247-590, Coptic and Arabic text on pp. 285-411; H. Hyvernat, *Bibliothecae Pierpont Morgan codices coptici photographicae expressi*, vol. XXV, Rome, 1922, pp. 105-54; B. Witte, *Die Sünden der Priester und Mönche. Koptische Eschatologie des 8. Jahrhunderts nach Kodex M 602 pp. 104-154 (ps. Athanasius) der Pierpont Morgan Library. Teil 1: Textausgabe* (*Arbeiten zum spätantiken und koptischen Ägypten* 12), Altenberge, 2002 (in the following we refer to this work as *PA* followed by a Roman number indicating the chapter and an Arabic number indicating the paragraph).

[9] Thus, it was written at the same time as the first redaction of the Arabic (originally Coptic) Apocalypse of Daniel. Compare H. Suermann, 'Notes concernant l'apocalypse copte de Daniel et la chute des omayyades', *Parole de l'Orient* 11, 1983, [pp. 329-48] 348.

the throne of Saint Mark will remain orthodox. The author was most probably Monophysite and was a monk.[10]

The Fourteenth Vision of Daniel

The *Fourteenth Vision of Daniel* is of Coptic origin. The date of its composition is controversial. In its present form it may come from the time of the fall of the Fatimid dynasty, though it is agreed that the *Vision* is a revised version of an older vision. Most scholars today accept that it was originally written at the end of the Umayyad period, though the reconstruction of the original version is not without difficulties because it is not certain in all cases whether a verse belongs to the original version. The dating of the *Vision* also depends on the interpretation of some of the verses that describe the last kings of the Arab rule. It may be that the eighteenth king of the vision refers to Marwān II, though I believe that already the seventeenth king is not an historical figure. So it must have been written before his time. We do not know anything about the author except that he wrote in Coptic. This probably indicates that he was Monophysite. The *Vision* is based on the Book of Daniel and describes the Arab rulers from the tenth to the eighteenth king, after whom the king of the Romans defeats the Ishmaelites and after forty years Gog and Magog will rise.[11]

Biblical quotations and allusions

The various apocalyptic texts not only cover the time of the Arab invasion, but also place current events in relation to the end of the world as the beginning of the final phase of world history or as

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[10] Another apocalypse with historical elements written in Arabic is also ascribed to Athanasius. According to the description in Graf, *GCAL*, vol. I, p. 277, it is late.

[11] H. Tattam, ed., *Prophetae majores in dialecto linguae Aegyptiacae Memphitica seu Coptica*, vol. II, Oxford, 1852, pp. 386-405; for the Arabic text, see C.H. Becker, 'Das Reich der Ishmaeliten im koptischen Danielbuch', *Nachrichten von der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philol.-hist. Klasse, 1915, Heft 1*, Göttingen, 1911, pp. 5-57; F. Macler, 'Les apocalypses apocryphes de Daniel', *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 33, 1896, pp. 163-76; O.F.A. Meinardus, 'A commentary on the XIVth vision of Daniel according to the Coptic version', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 32, 1966, pp. 394-449; idem, 'A Judaeo-Byzantine 14th vision of Daniel in the light of a Coptic Apocalypse', *Ekklesia Pharos* 60, 1978, pp. 645-66; Suermann, 'Notes', pp. 329-48 (in the following we refer to this work as *DV* followed by an Arabic number indicating the verse).

signs of the imminent final phase. Normally, an apocalyptic text does not start with current events, but earlier in history, usually some time before the present. The earlier time is very important for the plausibility of the text, because the reader can verify whether the 'prophecy from events' (*vaticinium ex eventu*) in the past was correct, and thus tell whether the 'prophecy' of the future will also be reliable. In some cases the apocalypse starts with the beginning of the world, as is the case with the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodios* and the *World History* of John bar Penkāyē.

For the description of the end of the world there is a canon of events which is common to all the texts, though there are also variations and individual accentuations and elisions in different texts. The scenario usually comprises the moral collapse of the world, the rise of Gog and Magog, the reign of the Antichrist, the Last Coming of Christ, and the Judgement. Many references to the Bible support the plausibility of the account of the end of the world.

We also find many references to and quotations from the Bible in the account of history before the time of the Arab invasion. This goes without saying for the period that is recounted in the Old Testament, even when it is not the only source. But we will not consider these quotations of or references to the Bible here. The purpose of this chapter is only to give quotations of and clear references to the Bible in the parts of the apocalyptic texts that relate to the invasion and rule of the Arabs. However, where texts refer to apocalyptic allusions from the Old Testament as archetypes of the events they directly recount, these are included.

The following chart displays the quotations of and references to the Bible in the six apocalyptic texts treated in this chapter:

Quotation	*Pseudo-Methodios*	*Pseudo-Ephraem*	*Pseudo-John*	*John bar Penkāyē*	*Pseudo-Athanasius*	*Fourteenth Vision of Daniel*
Gen 16.1-16					IX.8	22
Gen 16.1,11; 17.15-22; 21.20; 25.12		45-7				
Gen 16.11-12			75-6.81, 108-5			
Gen 16.12	XI,3.17		81-2	142*,167*	XI.2	
Gen 17.20; 25.16			77-8			
Gen 20		80-1				

Quotation	*Pseudo-Methodios*	*Pseudo-Ephraem*	*Pseudo-John*	*John bar Penkāyē*	*Pseudo-Athanasius*	*Fourteenth Vision of Daniel*
Gen 25.18			79-80			
Gen 37.12-41.36		78-9				
Deut 1.43 Is 65.12; Jer 7.13; 25.3					X.5	
Deut 9.4-6	XI.5					
Deut 28.63					X.5	
Deut 32.15				148*		
Deut 32.30				142*		
Judg 6.5,7,12	XI.13					
Judg 7.1	XI.1					
Ps 46.7 Matt 24.7-8				159*		
Ps 78.65	XIII.11			159*		
Prov 16.6				147*		
Is 1.5				164*		
Is 5.3-4				155*		
Is 5.20				148*		
Is 33.10-11				159*		
Is 41.15-16 Jer 15.7; Matt 3.12; Luke 3.17					IX.2	
Is 42.14 33.10-11				159*		
Jer 2.8 Is 53.6; 65.5				159*		
Jer 6.29-30				161*		
Jer 11.11 Zech 7.13 (twice)					X.5	
Jer 14.18				163*		
Amos 4.11 Zech 3.2				141* 165*		
Amos 8.5				166*		
Amos 9.8				142*		
Dan 7.2-7	(VIII.1)					4-10 (16-23)
Dan 7.7					IX.2	11-12
Dan 9.27; 11.31; 12.11 1 Maccabees 1.54; Matt 24.15; Mark 13.14					XI.3; XI.5	

Quotation	*Pseudo-Methodios*	*Pseudo-Ephraem*	*Pseudo-John*	*John bar Penkāyē*	*Pseudo-Athanasius*	*Fourteenth Vision of Daniel*
Dan 10.1-4						1-4
Dan 10.1-12.13			60-1			
Dan 11.5			61.78-9			
Dan 11.7			70-2			
Dan. 11.9-16			137			
Dan 11.15	X.6					
Dan 20.4					IX.3	
Ezek 39.17-18	XI.2					
Hos 4.9	XIII.1					
Hos 13.7					IX.6	
Hag 1.11					X.2, 4	
Hag 1.6, 9					X,4	
Matt 5.11-12	XIII.5					
Matt 10, 22	XIII.5					
Matt 13.24-30	XIII.4					
Matt 24.3					XI.1	
Matt 24.6-7; 21.11					X.4	40, 42, 44
Matt. 24.9			117-19			
Matt. 24.12			120-1			
Matt. 24.13	XIII.5					
Matt 24.27, 30		50, 53				
Matt 24.32-42						45-6
Luke 18.8	XII.2			166*		
Rom 1.26-7	XI.6-7					
Rom 9.6 1 Kings 19.18 ; Rom 11.4	XII.1					
1 Cor 7.30			92-3			
1 Cor 11.19					XI.3	
Eph 5.6; Col 3.6					XI.4	
1 Thess 5.3	XIII.1					
2 Thess 2.3	XI.17	48				
2 Thess 2.7-8				166*		
1 Tim 4.1 1 Tim 1.9; 2 Tim 3.2-4	XII.4.5			163*		
2 Tim 3.2-5				166*		
2 John 1.7				165*		

Quotation	*Pseudo-Methodios*	*Pseudo-Ephraem*	*Pseudo-John*	*John bar Penkāyē*	*Pseudo-Athanasius*	*Fourteenth Vision of Daniel*
Rev 9.6					X.5	
Rev 13.18					IX.9	47, 50
Ps.78.65; 143.6; Ezek 32.10; Is 52.10; Deut 32.41				159*		
1 Kings 14.15; Gen 4.12; Ezek 6.12				162*		
Is 51.20; Jer 14.18 Lam 4.7-10; Amos 4.11; Zech 3.2				163*		
Lam 4.8; Is 1.5; Amos 8.5				164*		
Is 13.8; 21.3; 26.17; Jer 22.23; 48.41; 49.22; 50.43, Matt 24.8; Mark 13.8					IX.7	

First of all we recognize that each author has a different selection of biblical texts to support his account of the Arab invasion and rule. Although there is also a common stock, they are not always interpreted in the same way.

The first reference is to the story of the birth of Ishmael (Gen 16.1-16). We find mention of it in Pseudo-Athanasius and in the *Fourteenth Vision of Daniel*, both of Coptic origin, and also in Pseudo-Ephraem. Theodoret of Cyrus and Sozomenus were earlier aware of the descent of the Arabs from Ishmael.[12]

The characterization of Ishmael as a wild ass whose hand will be against every man and every man's hand will be against him (Gen 16.12) is the most commonly quoted passage in our texts. Pseudo-Methodios, Pseudo-John, John bar Penkāyē and Pseudo-Athanasius all refer to it. The verse is not always quoted in its entirety, for some refer to the first part only in order to show the barbaric character of the Ishmaelites, while others refer to the second part in order to show that the Arabs will conquer the whole world but will also be defeated.

[12] I. Shahīd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*, Washington DC, 1989, pp. 179f., 332-49, 382f.

Ps. 78.65 occurs in Pseudo-Methodios and in John bar Penkāyē. The former applies it to the sudden awaking of the Byzantine emperor to fight with the Ishmaelites after their denial of a Christian Saviour, and the latter applies it to God when he starts to afflict the land.

Daniel's vision of the four winds and four beasts (Dan 7.2-7) is another common feature. It forms a pattern for the succession of political empires, being already in use before the time of the Arab invasion. Traditionally, the Roman Empire is understood as the fourth and last empire before the appearance of the time of the Antichrist, but at the end of the Umayyad period the vision is given a new interpretation in Coptic texts in so far as the rule of the Ishmaelites is regarded as the fourth empire. Dan 7.7, where the appearance of the fourth beast of the vision is mentioned, is particularly popular. Pseudo-Athanasius and the *Fourteenth Vision* both quote this text.

Both Pseudo-Methodios and Pseudo-John quote from the prophecies about the war between the Seleucids and Ptolemies in Dan 10.20-11:20, though they are both interested in the reference to the defeat of the King of the South. Pseudo-Methodios only quotes 11.15, but Pseudo-John quotes the whole of Dan 10.1-12.13 or parts of it, Dan 11.5 and Dan 11.9-16.

Matt 24.6-7 is part of Jesus' prediction of his Last Coming; it announces wars and battles between empires. These verses were quite often used in texts about the end time even before they were made to refer to the Ishmaelites, as were Matt 24.9 and 24.12. Pseudo-Methodios, Pseudo-Ephraem, Pseudo-John and Pseudo-Athanasius all refer to them.

The question in Luke 18.8 as to whether the Son of Man will find faith when he returns is quoted by Pseudo-Methodios[13] and also by John bar Penkāyē.[14] While Pseudo-Methodios understands it as a prophecy about the apostasy of Christians to Islam, John bar Penkāyē sees it as a foretelling of the degeneracy of humankind at the end of time, and does not connect it with apostasy at the end

[13] *PM* XII.2.
[14] *JbP* 166*.

of time. Both authors also quote 1 Tim 4.1 (1:9), a verse concerning heretics.[15]

We find references to 666, the number of the beast in Revelation, (Rev 13.18) in Pseudo-Athanasius and the *Fourteenth Vision of Daniel*.

Though some texts are quoted by different authors, they do not appear to have been aware of a common stock of biblical quotations associated with the Arab invasion and rule. Each author evidently found references to suit his own purpose.

Pseudo-Methodios

Pseudo-Methodios starts the section on the Arab conquest with a quotation from Dan 11.15,[16] from the prophecies about the first war between the Seleucids and Lagides (Dan 10.20-11.20). The reference here to the king of the south, whom Pseudo-Methodios calls the 'arm of the south', following the Peshiṭṭā, makes clear that the reign of the Arabs will come to an end and will not be long-lasting.[17]

Pseudo-Methodios quotes Gen 16.12 twice.[18] Citing the verse in combination with Ezek. 39.18, he characterizes Ishmael as a 'wild ass of the desert', changing it slightly from 'wild ass of man' under the influence of the exegetical tradition.[19] Reinink holds that this change supports his typology of 'Ishmaelites—Midianites—Arabs'.[20] Ezek 39.18 is part of the prophecy concerning Gog King of Magog, in which the birds and animals will enjoy a great sacrifice and will eat flesh and drink blood. The explanation of the combination of the two quotations follows immediately: Ishmael, who represents the Arabs, is sent in anger and rage against the whole earth, men, animals and plants.

A reference to a third biblical verse, Judg 7.1, is also included, from the story of Gideon's fight against the Midianites. Gabaoth,

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[15] *PM* XII.4, 5; *JbP* 163*, 166*.
[16] *PM* X.6.
[17] For the political background, see Reinink, *Die syrische Apokalypse*, X.6, nn. 5 and 6.
[18] *PM* XI.3, 17.
[19] Suermann, 'Geschichtstheologische Reaktion', p. 161.
[20] Reinink, *Die syrische Apokalypse*, XI,3, n. 8.

the place referred to here,[21] was near the camp of the Midianites, though it is also a reference to al-Jābiya near the Yarmūk, where the Arabs won a decisive victory over the Roman army in 636. Pseudo-Methodios here uses the typology 'Ishmaelites—Midianites—Arabs'.[22] Furthermore, the image that they are invading the Holy Land like locusts (Judg 6.5, 7, 12)[23] is also taken from story of Gideon's fight against the Midianites, the archetype of the battle between the Arabs and the Romans.

The reference to Deut 9.4-6,[24] in which Moses makes clear that God did not lead the Israelites into the promised land because of his love for them but because of the sins of its inhabitants, makes clear that political superiority is not an indication that the Arabs are God's beloved or that their religion is true.[25]

The following quotation from Rom 1.26-7,[26] that men's immoral and sinful conduct is the reason why God sent punishment, makes clear that the Ishmaelites are the punishment for the sins of the Christians and not a new chosen people.

The theme of punishment also underlines the quotation of 2 Thess 2.3.[27] The underlying Peshiṭṭā version[28] allows the possibility of interpreting Paul to mean that the final chastisement must come before the arrival of Antichrist. The final chastisement is the reign of the Ishmaelites.

The quotation of Rom 9.6 (1 Kings 19.18; Rom 11.4)[29] underlines that not all those who are called Christians are sincere. Pseudo-Methodios anticipates that a number of Christians will apostasise under the political pressure of the Arabs. The following quotation of Luke 18:8, about whether Christ will find faith when he returns to earth,[30] as well as the references to 1 Tim 4.1, 1.9 and 2 Tim

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[21] For details of the quotation, see Reinink, *Die syrische Apokalypse*, XI,1, n. 4.
[22] Compare *PM* V.
[23] *PM* XI.13.
[24] *PM* XI.5.
[25] For the political background, see Reinink, *Die syrische Apokalypse*, XI.5, n. 3.
[26] *PM* XI.6-7.
[27] *PM* XI.17.
[28] See Reinink, *Die syrische Apokalypse*, XI.17, n. 1.
[29] *PM* XII.1.
[30] *PM* XII.2.

3.2-4[31] underline the theme of apostasy at the end of time.

With the reference to Hos 4.9,[32] which states that God will treat the priests like the people, Pseudo-Methodios indicates that in the time of chastisement the order of divine service will break down.[33]

Matt 13.4[34] refers to the idea that the afflictions being suffered in this time of ordeal will lead to the separation of the faithful from the faithless. The quotations of Matt 5.11-12, 10.22 and 24.13[35] support this interpretation.

The sudden rise of the king of the Romans is referred to by a quotation of Ps 78.65,[36] which refers to the arousal of a man who has shaken off his wine, and by 1 Thess 5.3,[37] which describes the pangs of affliction that precede the awakening of the king as like the pangs of a woman giving birth. According to Reinink, the sudden awakening is a reaction to the polemical statement of the Muslims that Christians do not have a Saviour:[38] the Byzantine king is the defender of Christianity and has to react to this attack.

The main theme of Pseudo-Methodios' work is the succession of empires from the beginning of the world to its end, a political story and not the narration of religious history. Consequently, there is no mention of Jesus Christ and his crucifixion and resurrection because they are not political events. Rather, he refers to the traditional idea of the four empires according to the four winds or beasts of the Vision of Daniel (Dan 7.2):[39] the empires of the Kushites, the Macedonians, the Greeks and the Romans. This association is central to the whole argument of the work, and the typology 'Ishmaelites—Midianites—Arabs' is a secondary idea. The connection is formed by several biblical associations. It facilitates the understanding of the current Arab rule, because its history is already prefigured in the history of the Midianites as related in the Old Testament. Together with the interpretation of the four beasts, it implies that the

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[31] *PM* XII4-5.
[32] *PM* XIII.1.
[33] Reinink, *Die syrische Apokalypse*, XIII.1, nn. 2 and 3.
[34] *PM* XIII.4.
[35] *PM* XIII.5.
[36] *PM* XIII.11.
[37] *PM* XIII.11.
[38] See Reinink, *Die syrische Apokalypse*, XIII.11 n. 5; *PM* XIII.6.
[39] *PM* VIII.1.

Arab rule is only temporary and not a new empire. The Arab rule after the defeat of the Roman empire is no more than an indication that the end of time is near and the Antichrist is approaching, and also that this is a time of chastisement for the sins of the Christians. The historical events of the end of the seventh century show that the predications of the Bible about the end of time are true, and that the reader is really living in this trying period. Furthermore, Ps 68.31[40] is central to the concept that the Byzantine king will defeat the Arabs in the time of the severest distress.

It should be pointed out that other biblical quotations which do not appear in the section of the work on Arab rule also have a key function. For overall Pseudo-Methodios presents a complete political scheme, of which the Arab invasion and rule is only a part.

Pseudo-Ephraem

In the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Ephraem the part concerning the Arab invasion and rule is inserted in an older Apocalypse which gives the classical apocalyptic scenario. Nothing in it makes it particularly fitting for the insertion of the Arab invasion. The general idea of history as presented here is that Christians commit sins and that for chastisement God sends another people for a certain time to rule over them. The Arab rule is just another such punishment.

The biblical references in Pseudo-Ephraem are very few, and in the part with which we are concerned we only find references to the story of Genesis. The first[41] is to the descent of the Ishmaelites from Hagar, the slave of Sarah (Gen 16.1, 11; 17.15-22; 21.20; 25.12). This characterization allows further possibilities for describing the Arabs through other biblical quotations, but the author does not do this. However, he does attach a reference from 2 Thess 2.3,[42] thus saying that the Ishmaelites are sent in the name of the Antichrist.

The second reference[43] is to the story of Joseph, when he was sold (Gen 37.12-41.36), and the third reference[44] is to Abraham when

[40] *PM* XIV.5.
[41] *PE* 45-7.
[42] *PE* 48.
[43] *PE* 78-9.
[44] *PE* 80-1.

he was in Gerar (Gen 20). The implication is that the oppressive rule of the Arabs separates families and leads them into captivity. The author expresses the hope that God who accompanied Joseph as well as Abraham may also accompany all those who are separated by the Arab rulers. The end of this rule cannot be very far away.

References to Matthew characterize Ishmael's rule as a time of harsh fighting. In his interpretation of these current events the author does not really need the Bible as his authority. The only scheme he knows is the emergence of sin followed by punishment, a cycle that allows references to other agents besides the Arabs.

Pseudo-John

The central reference in Pseudo-John is Dan 10.1-12.13,[45] the great vision of Daniel concerning the end of time. Out of this vision Pseudo-John refers especially to the prediction that the king from the south will be mighty, though following the Peshiṭtā he does not speak of the king but of the wind from the south (Dan 11.5).[46] Daniel refers to the battle between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, but Pseudo-John identifies this with the Arabs. Later[47] he refers to Dan 11.9-16, where it is said that the king of the north will defeat the king of the south, though he does not speak of the king but of the spirit. From the whole vision of Daniel only these two sentences are important to him; the rest of the vision is ignored.

For the identification of the people called the wind of the south, Pseudo-John refers to Gen 17.20,[48] where Abraham is promised twelve sons who will be kings. Pseudo-John refers to them as twelve kings of the wind of the south. He also connects Gen 16.11-12[49] with the wind of the south, though this reference is quite vague. Neither the first part, where Ishmael is called a wild ass, nor the last part, where others raise their hand against him, is referred to. The reference to Gen 25.18[50] supports the idea that Ishmael will plunder the whole world. References to Matt 24.9 and 24.12[51] and

[45] *PJ* 60-1.
[46] *PJ* 61.78-9.
[47] *PJ* 137.
[48] *PJ* 75-8.
[49] *PJ* 81-2.
[50] *PJ* 79-80.
[51] *PJ* 117-21.

to 1 Cor 7.30[52] are employed to describe the apocalyptic character of the time of Ishmaelite rule.

John bar Penkāyē

The initial quotation here, of Amos 4.11 (Zech 3.2),[53] is like a *leitmotiv* for the rest of his *World History*. The way in which the Arabs took over the two empires at God's command was not with war and fighting, but in a menial fashion, 'such as when a brand is rescued out of the fire'.

The second quotation, of Deut 32.30,[54] comes from the song of Moses (Deut 32.1-43), the song he sings at the end of his life, in which he praises God as the only God and the power of his people who punishes the infidelity of Israel and also those who assail it. The verse 'One man chased a thousand and two men rooted ten thousand' in the song describes the God-given might of Israel's enemies to punish Israel for forgetting God and sinning, though he will also punish the enemies because of their pride. In John bar Penkāyē's interpretation of the song, God has placed victory in the hands of the Arabs, and it is not in their own power that they have conquered. The experience which Moses sings about is still valid in John's eyes for the understanding of the conquest by the Arabs. The verse is actually fulfilled in his own time.

The next quotation is embedded in the explanation given of it. It is a quotation from Amos' fifth vision concerning the destruction of the sanctuary (Amos 9.1-10). In the verse quoted, God calls Israel the 'sinful kingdom' (Amos 9.8) which he will destroy, though only the sinners, whom John identifies as the Persians, will perish.[55]

The enumeration of all the countries conquered by the sons of Hagar that follows this shows that the prophecy in Gen 16:12bα has been fulfilled: their hands will be over all.[56] This famous verse from the prediction of Ishmael's birth is used in most of the apocalyptic texts, and John bar Penkāyē only quotes here the first part of the second half of the verse. Later[57] he also quotes the half verse in

[52] *PJ* 92-3.
[53] *JbP* 141*, cf. 165*.
[54] *JbP* 142*.
[55] *JbP* 142*.
[56] *JbP* 142*.
[57] *JbP* 167*.

its entirety: 'His hand is upon all and the hand of all is upon him'. The second part is the foretelling of the end of the kingdom of the sons of Hagar.

The next quotation is found in the account of the reign of Muʿāwiya, whose time is characterized by peace. John quotes Prov 16.6[58] in order to show that this time has also been foreseen. But this period of peace is misused by the heretics, a situation that is already described by Isaiah (Is 5.20)[59] when he says, 'Accursed is he who shall call good bad and bad good'; the Christians behave like the Israelites behaved at the time of Isaiah. John makes this comparison explicitly, and quotes from Deut 32.15[60] that Israel has grown fat and recalcitrant and has forgotten God who made him.

There follows a long passage in which John describes the moral degradation and the malpractices of all Christians in a time of peace. He concludes with Is 5.3-4[61] that God did everything well but his people answered with evil, so God has warned that he will act. This is the end of the account of the time of Muʿāwiya, and he next reports on the civil war between Yazīd I and Ibn al-Zubayr from an eastern perspective without any reference to the Bible.

John describes the rebellion of the Shurāt with many quotations from the Bible. A mixture of biblical references (Ps 78.65; 143.6; Ezek 32.10; Is 52.10; Deut 32.41)[62] shows how God arose like a warrior, terrified the earth and revealed his arm. A verse from the first Servant Song in Isaiah (Is 42.14) and another verse from Is 33.10-11[63] emphasise that although God has long been silent he now rises up. The Christians act like apostate Israel (Jer 2.8),[64] and God does not use other people to fight against his enemies, but he himself wages war against them. This is illustrated by the quotation of Ps. 46.7, as well as the reference to Matt 24.7-8.[65] Matt 24 in particular describes signs of the *eschaton*, suggesting that John bar Penkāyē sees the end of time nearing.

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[58] *JbP* 147*.
[59] *JbP* 148*.
[60] *JbP* 148*.
[61] *JbP* 155*.
[62] *JbP* 159*.
[63] *JbP* 159*.
[64] *JbP* 159*.
[65] *JbP* 159*.

One of the means of God's punishment is the plague of 67 AH, though John does not regard this as a decisive act. He illustrates this with a verse from Jer 6.29-30:[66] 'The bellows for the fire has failed and so has the lead, and the refiner refines in vain. Call them reject silver, for the Lord has rejected them.' References to 1 Kings 14.15, Gen 4.12 and Ezek 6.12[67] provide further descriptions of the apocalyptic times.

The next reference is Jer 14.18: while Jeremiah only lamented over Jerusalem, the Christians lament over the entire world.[68] Quotations from Lamentations[69] exemplify this. With references to Is 1.5 and Amos 8.5[70] he indicates that the chastisement will even be intensified.

Quotations from the New Testament are used to indicate that the end of time has begun. With Luke 18.8[71] John states that the Lord will not find faith when he comes again. He does not refer to apostasy, as Pseudo-Methodios[72] does when citing this verse, but to moral and religious decadence. With 2 Tim 3.2-5[73] he shows how men have become self-loving, traitorous, and so on, and 2 John 1.7[74] announces that the Deceiver has still to appear. 2 Thess 2.7-8,[75] describing the removal of *tō katechon*, is interpreted as the removal of God's providential care.

In his introduction to Book XI of *Rīš Mellē*, Sebastian Brock identifies Gen 16.12 (the foretelling of the end of the Ishmaelites), Matt 24.7-8 (signs of the *eschaton*), 2 Thess 2.6-8 (the removal of *tō katechon*), and 2 John 1.7 (the 'Deceiver', who has still to appear) as key biblical texts for John. This is correct as far as the historical development is concerned, though John's main intention is to show God's instruction of humankind, because the interaction between God and humans is central for the understanding of history. Men become sinful and deny God's love for them despite their sins, so finally God afflicts the whole world. This idea is notably expressed

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66 *JbP* 161*.
67 *JbP* 162*.
68 *JbP* 163*.
69 Lam 4:7-10, *JbP* 163*.
70 *JbP* 164*.
71 *JbP* 166*.
72 *PM* XII.2.
73 *JbP* 165*.
74 *JbP* 165*.
75 *JbP* 166*.

in the Prophets, especially in Isaiah and Jeremiah, whom John frequently quotes.

Pseudo-Athanasius

The part of the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Athanasius with which we are concerned starts with the statement that the Roman Empire will be divided on account of its confession of two natures in Christ. The Persians will rule for a while, and then God will awaken a mighty people as numerous as locusts. These people are identified with the fourth beast in the vision of Daniel (Dan 7.7),[76] and Pseudo-Athanasius modifies the traditional interpretation of this famous vision to make this beast the Ishmaelites rather than the Romans. This beast will be more awesome then the others, and will destroy the rest. A reference to Is 41.15-16 (cf. Jer 15.7; Matt 3.12; Luke 3.17) follows, depicting this people as winnowing the nations like wheat,[77] though whereas in Isaiah it is Israel who winnows, here the Ishmaelites are the actors. The next reference is to Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the composite statue (Dan 20.4):[78] the fourth people will destroy all the countries in the way that iron masters and crushes everything. The destruction of the nations is on account of their godlessness, as Hos 13.7 predicts:[79] misery will afflict them on account of their sacrileges. This misery is a sign of the end of the world. The pains of the end are referred to in quotations from a number of biblical verses: Is 13.8; 21.3; 26.17; Jer 22.23; 48.41; 49.22; 50.43, Matt 24.8; Mark 13.8.[80] Only after mentioning that the ruler of this people resides in Damascus and that many Christians have converted to Islam does the author identify the people as Saracens, and specifies its origin in Ishmael, as indicated in Gen 16.1-16.[81] He explains how the rulers have changed the coinage, destroying all coins bearing the image of the cross, by referring to Rev 13.18:[82] on the money is written the name of the beast which corresponds to the number 666.

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[76] *PA* IX.2.
[77] *PA* IX.2.
[78] *PA* IX.3.
[79] *PA* IX.6.
[80] *PA* IX.7.
[81] *PA* IX.8.
[82] *PA* IX.9.

After a long description of the decline in morality, Pseudo-Athanasius depicts the miseries to come by referring to Hag 1.11, 6 and 9,[83] which describe how God will withhold his blessing, even rain and dew, and the people will consume their seeds so there will be only little for the harvest. Furthermore, according to Matt 24.7 and Luke 21.11[84] there will be epidemics, which are the beginnings of the pains, so that people will cry to God but he will not hear them because they have disobeyed his commands (Jer 11.11; Wisdom 7.13),[85] and, as Revelation foretells (Rev 9.6), in those days men will desire death, but it will not come.[86] The author goes on to describe the apocalyptic time until the appearance of the Antichrist and the final resurrection, employing references and quotations from the Old and New Testaments.

The central idea of Pseudo-Athanasius is based on Dan 7.7 (the identification of the fourth beast). Most of the other references describe the destructive nature of the rule of the Arabs, with the quotation of Rev 13:18, identifying the Ishmaelite rulers as apocalyptic, as the climax. The reference to Jer 11.11 and Zechariah 7.13 gives the key Bible text for the author's understanding that the afflictions came because of sin.

The Fourteenth Vision of Daniel

The title of this Apocalypse obviously refers to the Book of Daniel. The Prologue is a paraphrase of the introduction to Daniel's great vision (Dan 10.1-4),[87] and this is followed by the vision of the four beasts (Dan 7.2-7),[88] which differs from the traditional interpretation of the four beasts as the the empires of the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans. The Vision interprets them as the empires of the Persians, the Romans, the Greeks, who are the Byzantines, and the Ishmaelites. Thus the empire of the Arabs is no longer considered as a transitional phenomenon but as an empire on equal footing with those before. This also indicates that

[83] *PA* X.2, 4.
[84] *PA* X.4.
[85] *PA* X.5 (twice).
[86] *PA* X.5.
[87] *DV* 1-4.
[88] *DV* 4-10.

the ideology regarding the Roman Empire as the last before the coming of the Antichrist no longer holds,[89] for this apocalypse is written at the end of the Umayyad period, when the Arabs had already been rulers for a century.

Before this interpretation, the *Fourteenth Vision of Daniel* refers to the interpretation of the fourth beast with its ten horns in the Book of Daniel (Dan 7.7b-8).[90] In order to interpret the horns as the four Rightly Guided Caliphs and the Umayyad kings, the author has to change the number. So, in order to represent each ruler as a horn, he makes an addition of twice four horns.

The genealogy of the Ishmaelites is given according to Gen 16.[91] The quotation of Matt. 24.6 in the description of the time of the fifteenth king[92] shows that in the author's view the last days have begun. The sixteenth king, during whose reign there is a long time of peace as is described in Matt 24.32-42,[93] is already a fictional figure.[94] The penultimate king is the seventeenth, who is also a fictional figure with the number 666 on his forehead.[95] According to Rev. 13.18 he is the false prophet. The success of this apocalypse may derive from the fact that the seventeenth king is, in fact, Marwān II, whose name corresponds to the number 666.[96]

The key biblical text in this work is clearly Daniel's vision of the fourth beast, though here the reference to Rev 13.18 is the key for its apocalyptical interpretation.

Conclusion

In his introduction to Rīš Mellē, after he has compared the key biblical texts in Pseudo-Methodios and John bar Penkāyē, Sebastian Brock writes: 'The radical differences between these two apocalyptic outlooks are readily to be explained by the fact that the two authors

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[89] Suermann, 'Notes', p. 342.
[90] *DV* 11-12.
[91] *DV* 22.
[92] *DV* 40, 42, 44.
[93] *DV* 45-6.
[94] Suermann, 'Notes', p. 346.
[95] *DV* 47, 50.
[96] Suermann, 'Notes', p. 347.

belonged to different ecclesiastical bodies.'[97] In our paper we have examined several apocalyptic texts. Some such as Pseudo-Methodios, John bar Penkāyē and Pseudo-Athanasius, have a very rich theology of history, and include many biblical references or quotations. Others have a rather poor theology and do not refer as much to the Bible. When they appear, the biblical references and quotations give the key to the author's understanding of history, as they are used to interpret the mere facts of history.

Brock is right in as far as some political ideas are closely linked to the fact that the Christians lived in the former Roman empire (Pseudo-Methodios) or former Persian empire (John bar Penkāyē). But this does not account for the main differences between them. And it is surely not belonging to the Monophysite, Chalcedonian or Nestorian churches that determines their outlook on history. In the case of Pseudo-Methodios, we are not sure to which church he actually belonged. It is their theology of history that determines the differences between them, and the biblical references and quotations give the key to this understanding.

We find certain preferences in particular authors for specific biblical books. For Pseudo-Methodios, Judges is central, as well as Ps 78.65 and references in Paul's letters. Pseudo-Ephraem uses biblical references very rarely to characterize Arab rule; he only quotes from Genesis and Matthew. Pseudo-John has a preference for Genesis and Daniel, and John bar Penkāyē quite often quotes from the Old Testament Prophets. Pseudo-Athanasius also has a preference for the Prophets, specially the minor ones, though he quotes other books of the Old and New Testament as well. It is not surprising that the *Fourteenth Vision of Daniel* often quotes the Book of Daniel, but the author also refers to the last chapter of Matthew.

These different biblical quotations are not a simple matter of personal preference for the different authors, but are linked to different understandings of the Arab invasion and rule. Each quotation gives a specific characterization of the Arab invasion and rule, and it is a function of the author's whole concept of history expressed in his apocalyptic text.

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[97] See Brock, *North Mesopotamia* pp. 54-5.

BEYOND PROOFTEXTING (2): THE USE OF THE BIBLE IN SOME EARLY ARABIC CHRISTIAN APOLOGIES

MARK SWANSON

Beyond prooftexting?

The title of this essay may require a word of explanation. Some years ago I published an article on the use of the *Qur'an* in some early Arabic Christian apologetic literature, in which I argued that the use of the Qur'an that we find in those texts moves well 'beyond prooftexting'.[1] The Christian authors do, of course, use the Qur'an as evidence for particular points. We sometimes find instances of Christian interpreters tearing qur'anic verses out of context and forcing them to say things at violent odds with the usual interpretations of the Muslim community. However, we also find Christian writers who knew the Qur'an well, who absorbed its vocabulary and cadences and used them in the praise of God, and who actively sought out places of intersection between the Qur'an's and the Bible's narratives of God's dealing with humankind. While Christian interpreters would sometimes introduce their qur'anic citations with formulae such as 'You will find in the Qur'an that …', others could allude to the Qur'an with a deftly chosen word or phrase, setting off qur'anic echoes for those who had ears to hear them, and subtly opening up space for qur'anic content to seep into the background of an argument.[2]

When we turn to the use of the *Bible* in the early Arabic Christian apologetic literature, we must be prepared to encounter another complex range of uses, including some that we might call 'prooftexting', but others that move well beyond this. In what follows I will first introduce the text at the center of my inquiry, the anonymous Melkite[3] apology found in Sinai Arabic MS 154 and entitled by its

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[1] M.N. Swanson, 'Beyond prooftexting: approaches to the Qur'an in some early Arabic Christian apologies', *The Muslim World* 88, 1998, pp. 297-319.

[2] In addition to the previous article, see M.N. Swanson, 'A frivolous God? (*a-fa-ḥasibtum annamā khalaqnākum ʿabathan*)', in D. Thomas and C. Amos, eds, *A Faithful Presence: Essays for Kenneth Cragg*, London, 2003, pp. 166-83.

[3] 'Melkite' refers to the Chalcedonian Christian community within the *Dār al-Islām*,

first editor *On the Triune Nature of God*.[4] After that, I will give some illustrations of the range of uses of scripture found in this text. In a final section, I will focus on the early Melkite literature's use of the ancient Christian literary genre of *testimonia*, that is, of collections of Old Testament 'prophesies' of or 'witnesses' to the life of Christ and to Christian doctrines and practices. These Old Testament texts are often referred to as 'proof-texts', but I will argue that, in our literature, they function in ways that move far 'beyond prooftexting'.

A starting point

An excellent starting point for this inquiry is the anonymous Melkite apology found in Sinai Arabic MS 154[5] and entitled by Margaret Dunlop Gibson, in her edition and translation of 1899, *Fī tathlīth Allāh al-wāḥid* or *On the Triune Nature of God*.[6] Neither title is very good, since only the first part of the first section is about the Trinity. The work is, rather, an *Apology for the Christian Faith*—and below I shall simply call it the *Apology*. It should be noted that Mrs Gibson's edition and English translation of the text are incomplete: she did not transcribe 13 out of the 82 available pages of text;[7] perhaps the photographs from which she worked had been taken hastily or did not turn out uniformly well.[8] Fr Samir Khalil Samir has prepared

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which was quick to adopt Arabic as a language of apologetic and catechesis. See S.H. Griffith, '"Melkites", "Jacobites" and the Christological controversies in Arabic in third/ninth-century Syria', in D. Thomas, ed., *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, Leiden, 2001, pp. 9-55.

[4] On this text, see also David Bertaina's contribution to this volume.

[5] For a description of this manuscript [henceforth referred to as SA 154], see A.S. Atiya, *Catalogue Raisonné of the Mount Sinai Arabic Manuscripts: Complete Analytical Listing of the Arabic Collection Preserved in the Monastery of St Catherine on Mt Sinai*, vol. I, translated into Arabic by J.N. Youssef, Alexandria, 1970, pp. 296-8.

[6] M.D. Gibson, ed., *An Arabic Version of the Acts of the Apostles and the Seven Catholic Epistles from an Eighth or Ninth Century MS. in the Convent of St Catherine on Mount Sinai, with a Treatise 'On the Triune Nature of God'* (*Studia Sinaitica* 7), London, 1899 (repr. Piscataway NJ, 2003).

[7] Of a text that runs from 99r-139v in the manuscript, Mrs Gibson omitted ff. 106r, 107r, 110v, 111v, and 133v-139v. We should note that several pages in the Library of Congress film of the manuscript are much faded, and f. 135v is blank.

[8] Gibson tells us that her main concentration with regard to SA 154 had been on the biblical text that occupies ff. 1-96, but that she photographed 'the remainder of the volume' during her fourth trip to Sinai in 1897; Gibson, *An Arabic Version*, p. vi.

a new edition of the text, and we look forward to its publication. In the meantime, Sr Maria Gallo has published an Italian translation of Gibson's edition, with extensive footnotes documenting the author's scriptural quotations and allusions.[9]

It was not inappropriate that part of the Fifth Woodbrooke-Mingana Symposium be devoted to this *Apology*. Samir called this text to the attention of many scholars in an important presentation at the *First* Woodbrooke-Mingana Symposium in 1990,[10] but the connections of the text to Woodbrooke go deeper that that. The first scholarly article concerning the *Apology* was written by J. Rendel Harris, in a review of Gibson's edition published in *The American Journal of Theology* in 1901, and reprinted in the first volume of his collection of studies entitled *Testimonies*, published by Cambridge University Press in 1916.[11] In the meantime, Harris had been appointed the first Director of Studies and Principal at Woodbrooke College, founded in 1903, and had provided hospitality to the young Chaldaean Catholic priest Alphonse Mingana when he washed up on British shores in 1913.[12] Earlier, it was Harris who in a number of ways paved the way for the four visits to Sinai by the scholarly widows and twin sisters, Margaret Dunlop Gibson and Agnes Smith Lewis;[13] it was during their fourth visit to the Monastery of St Catherine in 1897 that Mrs Gibson photographed our treatise, allowing for its inclusion in her 1899 publication—and for Harris' review in 1901.

We shall return to that review, but at this point it might be useful to summarize the structure of the *Apology*, which I attempt to do in

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[9] Palestinese anonimo, *Omelia arabo-cristiana dell'VIII secolo*, trans. M. Gallo (*Collana di Testi Patristici* 116), Rome, 1994.

[10] S.K. Samir, 'The earliest Arab apology for Christianity (c. 750)', in S.K. Samir and J.S. Nielsen, eds, *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750-1258)* (*Studies in the History of Religions* 63), Leiden, 1994, pp. 57-114. Samir had earlier presented the text at the Third International Congress of Arabic Christian Studies, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1988: 'Une apologie arabe du christianisme d'époque umayyade?' *Parole de l'Orient* 16, 1990-1, pp. 85-106.

[11] J. Rendel Harris, 'A tract on the triune nature of God', *American Journal of Theology* 5, 1901, pp. 75-86; reprinted in idem, *Testimonies*, Part I, London, 1916, pp. 39-51 [= Chapter 5, 'Testimonies against the Mohammedans'].

[12] [S.]K. Samir, *Alphonse Mingana, 1878-1937, and his Contribution to Early Christian-Muslim Studies*, Birmingham, 1990.

[13] See A. Smith Lewis and M.D. Gibson, *In the Shadow of Sinai: Stories of Travel and Biblical Research*, Brighton, 1999.

the following chart:

Chapters	*Folios in SA 154*	*Comments*
Introduction	99r	A beautiful prayer profoundly influenced by the language of the Qur'an.[14]
I. Trinity and Incarnation	99r-111v	
A. The Trinity	99r-102v	Arguments from scripture (Bible and Qur'an), simple analogies from nature.
B. Christ	102v-111v	
1. The story of redemption, from Adam to Christ	102v-108r	Biblical and qur'anic material interwoven in the stories of the prophets/messengers.[15]
2. Christ's divinity	108r-111v	Biblical material predominates. Includes a 'true religion' apology, in which we find a 'date': 746 years since the establishment of Christianity.
II. Testimonies	111v-139v	In the tradition of *testimonia*-collections, with occasional recognition that the treatise is addressed to Muslims rather than Jews.
A. The Life of Christ	111v-128v	23 Old Testament texts (or composite texts) on Christ's life, from Incarnation and birth to ascension and session at the Father's right hand.
B. Baptism	128v-137r	Includes 8 Old Testament prophesies.
C. The Cross	137r-139v	Includes 3 Old Testament prophesies.

The manuscript breaks off in mid-sentence, and we do not know how much of the text might be missing. It would be possible to imagine more chapters of testimonies; having had one on baptism, for example, one might expect to see a chapter on the eucharist. On the other hand, the text as we have it breaks off during a discussion of Christ's return on the Day of Resurrection (carrying his cross as his 'sign'), which could well be a fitting climax to the treatise as a whole.

If the original extent of the treatise is a mystery, the date of its composition is also somewhat mysterious, although the text itself gives us a tantalizing clue when it states that the Christian religion

[14] See Swanson, 'Beyond prooftexting', pp. 305-8.
[15] Ibid., pp. 308-11.

had been established for 746 years.[16] Elsewhere I have argued that this likely means 746 years after the death of Christ calculated according to the Alexandria world era, which results in a date of AD 788;[17] others have suggested different conversions yielding earlier dates.[18] In any event, we are dealing with an Arabic Christian apologetic text of the second/eighth century: the oldest well-preserved Arabic Christian apology in our possession.

Uses of scripture: a sketch

Beginning with the second/eighth-century Arabic *Apology*, what sorts of uses of the Bible do we find?

1. *The Bible as literature, wisdom and history*

A first observation is that quotation of or allusion to the Bible does not necessarily depend for its effectiveness on its status as sacred scripture. The Bible, after all, is full of poetic turns of phrase, pithy wisdom sayings and dramatic narratives that can be appreciated by most sensitive readers, including those who reject the Bible's religious claims.

A case in point is provided by a passage in the *Apology*'s chapter on the Trinity. The author, having made his case for the doctrine of the Trinity, goes on to emphasize that, in the final analysis, human reason is incapable of grasping the things of God; whatever knowledge we have of God is granted 'through faith, piety, fear of God and the purification of the Spirit'. He then adds:

> If anyone of the people hopes to grasp something of the greatness of God, he is seeking his shadow—which can never be grasped! If anyone surmises that he can proclaim certain knowledge of God's sovereign power [*qadr*], he is able to measure out the water of the sea

[16] SA 154, f. 110v.

[17] M.N. Swanson, 'Some considerations for the dating of *Fī taṯlīṯ Allāh al-wāḥid* (Sinai Ar. 154) and *al-Ǧāmiʿ wuǧūh al-īmān* (London, British Library or. 4950),' *Parole de l'Orient* 18, 1993, pp. 115-41.

[18] Beginning with Samir's studies (listed in Note 10 above), where a range of possibilities from AD 738 to 771 is given. Griffith has maintained that the 746 years should be counted from the *Incarnation* in the Alexandrian world era, giving a date of 755; S.H. Griffith, 'The view of Islam from the monasteries of Palestine in the early ʿAbbāsid period: Theodore Abū Qurrah and the *Summa Theologiae Arabica*', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 7, 1996, [pp. 9-28] p. 11, n. 20.

> in the hollow of his hand! But God (may his name be blessed and his mention exalted!) is more exalted and glorious than that intellect and sight may grasp him.[19]

Now, the image of measuring out the water of the sea in the hollow of one's hand comes from Isaiah 40.12:

> Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand
> and marked off the heavens with a span,
> enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure,
> and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?[20]

A few Christian readers might recognize the biblical allusion, while others might sense no more than, at most, some slight elevation in the tone of the passage.[21] The fact that the Old Testament has been cited is not really relevant to the argument. Rather, the book of Isaiah has simply provided a vivid image that helps the author to make his point.

Let us take one other example. Later in the *Apology*, the author constructs what may be called a 'true religion' apology,[22] which builds on the actual historical success of the Christian religion despite, in its earliest days, the lack of any humanly-comprehensible inducements for people to accept its strange and difficult teachings. In support of his contention that there is a correlation between a religion's truth and its historical success or failure, the author makes a free quotation of the passage in Acts 5.34-9 in which the wise Pharisee Gamaliel counsels restraint in taking measures against the nascent Christian church:

> O assembly of the Children of Israel, leave this group be, and do not prevent them from saying what they say and doing what they do. For if their affair is from God, then their religion will be established and

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[19] SA 154, f. 101r.

[20] From the *New Revised Standard Version Bible* (1989).

[21] In a discussion of the possibility of an echo of Job 13.16 (LXX) in Philippians 1.19, New Testament scholar Richard B. Hays writes: 'A reader nurtured on the LXX might, without consciously marking the allusion, sense a momentary ripple of elevated diction in the phrase, producing a heightened dramatic emphasis' (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of St Paul*, New Haven CT and London, 1989, p. 21).

[22] For such apologies, see S.H. Griffith, 'Comparative religion in the apologetics of the first Christian Arabic theologians', in idem, *The Beginnings of Christian Theology in Arabic: Muslim-Christian Encounters in the Early Islamic Period* (*Variorum Collected Studies Series* CS746), Aldershot, Hampshire and Burlington VT, 2002, Article I.

> be upright for them. And if their affair is from other than God, then God will bring it to naught ….[23]

Here a biblical text is quoted to make a point, but the point depends on the text's own inherent wisdom rather than any authority it possesses as sacred scripture.

2. *The Bible as narrative of salvation history*

A second kind of exploitation of biblical material in our literature depends not so much on the allusion to or quotation of individual biblical passages in order to make some particular point, but rather on the construction of a brief narrative redescription of the biblical materials, one that elucidates humanity's need for redemption and that achieves its climax in the story of the Incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Christ, narrated as the divine response to and resolution of that need.[24] The second/eighth-century Arabic *Apology* provides an excellent example of this in a lengthy passage in its first section (I.B.1 in the chart above), devoted to the story of human redemption, from Adam to Christ. The narrator briefly tells the story of Adam and Eve and the fall; of Noah; of Abraham and Lot; of Moses and the Children of Israel.[25] The author summarizes and shapes the biblical materials in order to drive home a single point: humanity has fallen under Satan's sway, and God's messengers and prophets have had no lasting success at calling human beings out of their slavery. No one from among *the people* was capable of saving Adam's progeny from their bondage to the Devil. With this, the stage is set for what we might call Act Two in the author's retelling of the drama of human salvation, in which God *himself* acts for the salvation of humanity, sending his *Word* who, veiled in human flesh, overcame the Devil and raised up fallen humanity.

The use of scripture that we find here is typical of soteriological texts, in which we normally find a description of humanity's plight followed by a presentation of the divine response in Christ. Both

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[23] SA 154, f. 111r.

[24] On the ineluctably *narrative* character of Christian soteriological discourse, see M. Root, 'The narrative structure of soteriology', in S. Hauerwas and L.G. Jones, eds, *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*, Grand Rapids MI, 1989, pp. 263-78.

[25] SA 154, ff. 102v-105r. On this passage, see Swanson, 'Beyond prooftexting', pp. 308-11.

'acts' gain their Christian cogency from the extent to which they may be seen as faithful summaries of scripture. As I will point out later, the authors of the early Arabic apologies also do their best to weave *qur'anic* language and concepts into their narrative, so that the power of the presentation does not depend solely on the readers' acceptance of the Christian Bible. In the case of the *Apology*, this may be seen in the very sequence of stories—Noah, (Abraham and) Lot, Moses—a sequence that may be found in several suras of the Qur'an.[26]

3. *Testimonia*

Much of the text of the *Apology*, especially in its second part, is structured around *testimonia*, that is, Old Testament texts that are used as proofs or prophesies of the Incarnation, birth, ministry, passion, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, as well as of particular Christian doctrines and practices. It is here that we can most naturally speak of biblical 'proof-texts', although we should immediately note that the *testimonia* provide their 'proof' in a great variety of ways. Sometimes the quoted passage provides evidence in a fairly uncomplicated manner. When, for example, the author of the *Apology* wishes to establish that God has a creative Spirit, he quotes Job 33.4 where Job's friend confesses, 'It is the Spirit of the Lord who has created me.'[27] Here the quoted verse has a straightforward probative force. The situation is much more complex when, a few pages later, the *testimonium* is Habakkuk 3.3: 'God shall come from Teman, and the Holy One from a dark shaded mountain.' Here we are informed that Teman refers to Bethlehem and that the 'shaded mountain' is the Virgin Mary—who, according to Luke 1.35, was *overshadowed* by the power of the Most High when she conceived Jesus.[28] And thus Habakkuk has prophesied the birth of the incarnate God from the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem! Here we are dealing with a complex, centuries-old tradition of typological interpretation, one that probably has probative force only for the highly initiated.

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[26] See, for example, *Sūrat Hūd* (11).
[27] SA 154, f. 118v.
[28] Ibid., f. 124r-v.

Testimonia, *the Christian worldview, and Muslim readers*

This last example raises a number of questions, perhaps the most pressing of which is: Why should we find such a complex example of typological exegesis in a treatise that has the form of an apologetic text addressed to Muslims? In the remainder of this article, I would like to investigate a little more closely the function of the *testimonia* in the *Apology* as well as in other Arabic Melkite texts, in the hope of being able to shed a little light on the *Sitz im Leben* of these texts. I summarize the main points of my argument in advance:

1. The influence of the ancient Christian literary form of the *testimonia*-collection is of great importance to many early Arabic Melkite apologetic texts.
2. The use of scripture within this *testimonia* tradition goes well 'beyond prooftexting' in that it adumbrates and commends an entire Christian 'worldview'.
3. Even when these scripturally-rich texts claimed to be addressing non-Christians—Muslims in the case of the texts considered here—most of their readers were Christians. We should not overlook the catechetical and homiletic uses of texts that are regularly labeled 'apologetic', or overestimate their Muslim readership.
4. All the same, the authors of the texts considered here attempted to provide what they believed might be 'entry points' for Muslims into the Christian worldview, by providing rationales or inducements for Muslims to take the witness of the Christian scriptures seriously.

I shall now return to each of these points in detail.

1. *The* Testimonia *and early Arabic Melkite texts*

It was the prominence of *testimonia* in the Arabic *Apology* that struck Rendel Harris in his 1901 review of Mrs Gibson's edition. Harris was one of the great early students of *testimonia*-collections,[29] a com-

[29] On the contribution of Harris, see M.C. Albl, *'And Scripture Cannot Be Broken': The Form and Function of the Early Christian* Testimonia *Collections* (*Supplements to Novum Testamentum* 96), Leiden, 1999, pp. 19-25; A. Falcetta, 'The testimony research of James Rendel Harris', *Novum Testamentum* 45, 2003, pp. 280-99. Harris hoped to

mon genre of early Christian literature that can be traced back with considerable certainty to the second Christian century. Indeed, Harris believed, as do a number of contemporary scholars, that written *testimonia*-collections may have been in existence before the books of the New Testament were written.[30] When Harris looked at the testimonies gathered together in the Arabic *Apology*, he immediately saw the early patristic parallels, or, in his own words, 'the *disjecta membra* of Justin and Ariston, of Irenaeus, Tertullian and Cyprian, and a number of other writers between whom there is a nexus, as regards both the matter and the manner of their arguments'.[31] For Harris and most scholars of the early Christian *testimonia*-collections, it has been conventional wisdom that they developed in the context of controversy with Jews: they would serve the Christian apologist trying to prove to Jews from their own scripture that Jesus was the predicted Messiah. In the Arabic *Apology*, Harris saw a collection of testimonies that had been redeployed for use with Muslims seen as 'a new kind of Jew'.[32]

If our *Apology* has been decisively shaped by the tradition of the *testimonia*-collections, it is not alone in the early Melkite literature. Theodore Abū Qurra is reported to have compiled *testimonia*-collections,[33] and several of his apologetic treatises—notably those on the Trinity, on the necessity of Redemption, on the possibility of Incarnation, and on God's having a Son—contain long sections of

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be able to work backwards from existing testimony-collections to a single source, a *Testimony Book* that he came to believe had been prepared by the evangelist Matthew and that antedated the books of the New Testament itself. While the last century of scholarship has not been convinced either by Harris' regular references to a single *Book* or its attribution to Matthew, his methods for studying the material continue to be used, and his conviction that New Testament writers had this kind of resource at their disposal continues to attract supporters.

[30] See J. Daniélou, *Études d'exégèse judéo-chrétienne (Les Testimonia)* (*Théologie Historique* 5), Paris, 1966.

[31] Harris, 'A Tract', p. 75 = *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 40.

[32] Harris, 'A Tract', p. 76 = *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 41.

[33] Two such collections were preserved in Sbath 1324: 'A collection of the prophesies of the Prophets affirming and authenticating the Incarnation of Christ, his crucifixion, burial, resurrection and ascension' (pp. 223-30), and 'On the prophecies of the Prophets, allusions and types of the advent of Christ and his Incarnation, sufferings, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension into Heaven; and On the abolition and cancellation of the religion of the Jews because of their unbelief in Christ, and the entry of the Gentiles in their place because of their belief in Christ and obedience to him' (pp. 231-41).

scriptural *testimonia*.[34] Chapter Thirteen of the third/ninth-century compilation *Al-jāmiʿ wujūh al-īmān* is a *testimonia*-collection.[35] Another third/ninth-century compilation, *Al-burhān* by Peter of Bayt Raʾs,[36] contains no fewer than three *testimonia*-collections in the form that we have it, all of them reporting the Old Testament's witness to Christ and to Christian doctrine, but in different ways.[37] Book Two of *Al-burhān*[38] is devoted to the Old Testament *types* of events from the life of Christ; for example, Moses' wooden staff, with which he divided the waters of the Red Sea, is a type of Christ's wooden cross.[39] Book Three of *Al-burhān* is given over to a simple listing, in rough biblical order, of Old Testament passages that could be used to make specifically Christian points; many of them have to do with divine theophanies, or are passages with multiple references to 'Lord' or 'God', allowing for a Christological or Trinitarian reading.[40] Book Four of *Al-burhān* presents the Old Testament *testimonia* to the life of Christ in narrative sequence: Incarnation, birth, life, passion, death, resurrection, ascension and second coming.[41] Book Four, we should notice, is closely related to an earlier Greek *testimonia*-collection, Question 137 of the pseudo-Athanasian work *Questions to Antiochus the Dux*.[42]

Since *Al-burhān* provides the most extensive early Melkite *testimonia*-collection for which we have an edition, it can serve as a point of reference for the testimonies found in the second/eighth-century Arabic *Apology*. Let me give an example—one which Rendel Har-

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[34] See n. 47 below.

[35] BL or. 4950, ff. 54v-76r.

[36] P. Cachia, ed., and W.M. Watt, trans., *Eutychius of Alexandria: The Book of the Demonstration (Kitab al-Burhan)*, vols I-II (*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 192-3, 209-10 = ar. 20-3), Louvain, 1960-1. In what follows I will refer to the *paragraph* number, allowing the text to be consulted in either the text or the English translation volumes. The attribution to Eutychius of Alexandria was a suggestion of Graf's that has been refuted in recent years.

[37] The three books of *testimonia* take up the whole of volume II in Cachia's edition or Watt's translation.

[38] Cachia and Watt, *Demonstration*, II, par. 401-504.

[39] Ibid., par. 447-8.

[40] Ibid., par. 505-610. The first testimony is Gen 1.26: 'And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness".' While no explanation for the relevance of the passage is given, it is regularly taken as a *testimonium* for plurality in the Godhead, given the use of the first person plural.

[41] Ibid., par. 611-32.

[42] *PG* XXVIII, cols. 683-700.

ris immediately seized upon.[43] In one passage from the *Apology*'s chapter on Redemption (I.B.1), the author presents the cries of the prophets, pleading to God for redemption from Satan's sway over humankind:

> One of them said: 'Lord, bow the Heaven and come down to us.' Another said: '[You who are] seated on the cherubim, manifest yourself to us. Stir up your power, and come to save us.' Another was saying: 'Not an intercessor and not an angel, but the Lord will come and save us.' Another prophesied and said: 'God sent his Word, and healed us from our toil and saved us.' Another prophesied and said: 'He shall come openly, and shall not tarry.' David the prophet prophesied and said: 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. O Lord our God, save us.' He also said: 'God shall come and shall not be silent. Fire shall devour before him, and [ ] break out round about him.'[44]

The identification of the passages is found the in the following chart. According to Harris, they 'form part of an accepted tradition, and probably of a complete collection';[45] he was immediately able to recognize parallels even with respect to non-standard wording of the scripture passages in ancient *testimonia*-collections such as *To Quirinius* by Cyprian of Carthage, written in AD 248, and the *Testimonies against the Jews* falsely attributed to Gregory of Nyssa, written around AD 400.[46] What the chart also shows, however, is that we find most of these same passages in *Al-burhān*, especially in Book Four (and thus also in *Questions to Antiochus the Dux*, Q. 137), usually in groups of two or three together. One can easily imagine the author of our Arabic *Apology* having recourse to a (Greek) *testimonia*-collection similar to such texts.

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[43] See Harris, 'A Tract', pp. 78-9 = *Testimonies*, vol. I, pp. 43-5.

[44] SA 154, f. 105v. The word represented by the empty square brackets in the last line appears to be *tn'm*.

[45] Harris, 'A Tract', p. 78 = *Testimonies*, vol. I, p. 43.

[46] We now have an excellent annotated edition and translation of this text: Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa, *Testimonies against the Jews*, trans. M.C. Albl (*Writings from the Graeco-Roman World* 8), Atlanta GA, 2004.

Apology (SA 154, f. 105v)	*Burhān* Book 3 (ed. Cachia; paragraph no.)	*Burhān* Book 4 (ed. Cachia; paragraph no.)	*Questions to Antiochus the Dux*, Question 137, *PG* XXVIII, cols 683-700
1. Ps 144.5 (with influence of Ps. 18.9)		612 (Ps 18.9)	1. (684D) (Ps 18.9)
2. Ps 80.1b-2		612	1. (684D) (v. 1b)
3. Is 63.9		617	5. (688B)
4. Ps 107.20	603	623	
5. Hab 2:3		617 (conflated with Ps 50.3	
6. Ps 118.26a, 25a		616 (vv. 26a, 27)	1. (684D) (v. 27), 5. (688B) (vv. 26a, 27)
7. Ps 50.3	595	617 (conflated with Hab 2.3)	5. (688B)

We can make the same kind of chart for the whole of Part II of the *Apology*, with its lists of testimonies to the life of Christ, to his baptism, and to the cross:

Apology (SA 154, f. 105v)	*Burhān* Book 2 (ed. Cachia; paragraph no.)	*Burhān* Book 3 (ed. Cachia; paragraph no.)	*Burhān* Book 4 (ed. Cachia; paragraph no.)	*Questions to Antiochus the Dux*, Question 137, *PG* XXVIII, cols 683-700
II.A. *Life of Christ*				
1. Ps 110.3	468	604	616	4. (688A)
2. Ps 2.7-9			620	5. (688D)
3. Ps 110.1		604	616	
4. Is 59.20				
5. Is 11.10				
6. Is 63.9			617	5. (688B)
7. Is 7.14		572	618	5. (688C)
8. Is 9.6		573	618	5. (688C)
9. Is 2.3				
10. Ps 47.8, 87.6, 22.27				5. (688D), Ps. 47
11. Micah 5.2			618	6. (689A)
12. Ps 72.6-12, 17, 5		599 (v. 5)		6. (689BC), vv. 6-8, 17
13. Is 19.1			621	6. (689A)
14. Job 9.8				7. (689CD)

15. Ps 33.6	468	606		
16. Job 33.4	470			
17. Dan 9.24			613	2. (685AB)
18. Is 35.3-6a			617	5. (688B)
19. Gen 49.9-10			620	
20. Baruch 3.35-7		584		1. (684D)
21. Hab 3.3			612, 618	1. (684D)
22. Dan 2.34-5		500 f.		
23. Zech 9.9			624	7. (689D)
II.B. *Baptism*				
1. Ps 29.3			622	6. (689B)
2. Ps 74.13b-14a			622	7. (689C)
3. Ezek 36.25			622	
4. Is 1.16			(622, v. 18)	
5. Ps 51.2		(607, v. 11)	(622, v. 7)	
6. Is 12.3-4			622	
7. Micah 7.18-19				
8. Is 49.10b				
II.C. *Cross*				
1. Deut 28.66			627	10. (696D)
2. Num 21.6-9	454-6			
3. Zech 12.10b			627	10. (696D)

About two-thirds of the *testimonies* found in the *Apology* are also to be found in Book Four of *Al-burhān*, or in Q. 137 of *Questions to Antiochus the Dux*. It is especially striking to see how many of the same testimonies to Christian baptism are found, all together, either in a single chapter of the *Apology* or in a single paragraph of Book Four of *Al-burhān*. It is again not difficult to imagine that the author of our *Apology* had recourse to a work of this sort as he composed his text.

Charts similar to the ones above could be made for the lists of testimonies found in the apologies of Theodore Abū Qurra,[47] or

[47] Several such lists can be found in the short apologetic treatises of Theodore Abū Qurra published in C. Bacha, *Mayāmir Thā'ūdūrus Abī Qurra usquf Ḥarrān, aqdam ta'līf ʿarabī naṣrānī*, Beirut, 1904, pp. 29-32 (on the Trinity), 88-9 (on the death of Christ), 98-103 (on the divine Son), 181-2 (that God has a throne in Heaven), 183-4 (on Christ's sinless suffering), 185-6 (on God's self-localization in the Old Testament).

in many chapters of the third/ninth-century *Adversus Judaeos* work known as the *Book of the Master and the Pupil* (43 chapters) by Thaddeus of Edessa.[48] We need an edition and analysis of Chapter 13 of *Al-jāmiʿ wujūh al-īmān*, laying it alongside texts such as Book Four of *Al-burhān*.[49] There is much work to be done! I think, though, that my first main point is clear: *testimonia*-collections play an important role in early Arabic Melkite apologetic literature, either in themselves or as resources on which authors could draw.[50]

2. *Commending a Christian worldview*

My second main point has to do with the function of the testimonies in a text such as the *Apology*. Here, I would argue, the testimonies play a major role in laying out and commending a *worldview*. For an understanding of the term 'worldview', I draw on an analysis by the New Testament scholar N.T. Wright,[51] for whom worldviews have four characteristic functions. First, they provide *stories* through which human beings understand their existence; one can go further and say that in compelling worldviews these stories fall within a kind of Big Story, an 'overarching meta-narrative'.[52] Second, worldviews provide the *questions* that are fundamental to our understanding of human existence: 'who are we, where are we, what is wrong, and what is the solution?' Third, these stories and questions are expressed in *rituals* and *symbols*. And fourth, they set forth particular *actions*,

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[48] On the manuscripts of this work, see M.N. Swanson, 'Three Sinai manuscripts of books "of the Master and the Disciple" and their *membra disiecta* in Birmingham', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 65, 1999, pp. 347-61.

[49] Blor. 4950, ff. 54v-76r. In one test, I compared the testimonies to the passion and death of Christ in *al-Jāmiʿ*, Ch. 13, with the corresponding testimonies of *Al-burhān*, Book 4, paragraphs 626-8 in the edition of Cachia. In comparing 35 testimonies of *Al-jāmiʿ* to 33 testimonies of *Al-burhān*, I count 23 in common. Zech 14.5-7 is misattributed to the prophet Micah in both lists.

[50] For the use of *testimonia* by an author from the *Jacobite* community, see Sandra Keating's contribution to the present volume.

[51] N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (*Christian Origins and the Question of God* 1), Minneapolis MN, 1992, pp. 122-6. I am also influenced by the definition of a 'culture' in D.S. Yeago, 'Messiah's people: the culture of the Church in the midst of the nations', *Pro Ecclesia* 6, 1997, p. 150: 'A culture … is a complex of symbols and practices, communally acknowledged as significant, enclosed within an overarching meta-narrative, which shapes the perceptions, experience, and sense of identity of a community.'

[52] Yeago's term in ibid., p. 150.

providing a guide to life within this world.

The *Apology* is a powerful presentation of a Christian worldview, and its use of scripture is integral to that presentation. It is the Christian scriptures that provide an overarching meta-narrative, from the creation of the world (note that Genesis 1 is quoted at length in the first chapter, on the Trinity)[53] to Christ's return on the Day of Resurrection (which is the topic when the text breaks off).[54] Within this Big Story, the first part of the *Apology* presents a series of individual narratives from the history of salvation, from humanity's fall (which addresses the 'What is wrong?' question) to the Incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus (which answers the question, 'What is the solution?'). The testimonies in the second part of the *Apology* then bear witness that the scriptural narrative is internally coherent, with Old Testament prophesies matching New Testament events in such a way as to move the receptive reader to wonder. Several times, the author of the *Apology* nearly gets carried away with aesthetic delight: 'Look how beautiful is the correspondence of the acts of Christ to the prophesies of the prophets!'[55]

The all-encompassing scope and beautifully-wrought coherence of the scriptures, then, provide for a worldview that is, if I may put it this way, inhabitable. The rituals and symbols associated with this worldview are not neglected by the *Apology*, as may be seen from its final two chapters: Christians enter the reality described by this scriptural narrative through the ritual of *baptism*; within it, their great symbol is the *cross*. And throughout the *Apology* there are indications of the sort of actions that are suitable for life within this worldview, actions characterized by freedom from the Devil, obedience to God, and the imitation of Christ.

I would like to suggest that wherever *testimonia*-collections are reproduced or used, this Christian worldview is adumbrated: the testimonies serve (for Christians) as a reminder of a scripture that not only provides the overarching meta-narrative within which the fundamental questions of human existence are defined and answered, but which is, at the same time, a coherent whole, magnificently

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[53] SA 154, f. 100r.
[54] Ibid., f. 137r.
[55] Ibid., f. 118r; this is one of several instances of this sort.

woven together through seemingly countless instances of testimony and fulfillment. Some of these instances are familiar; others are just waiting to be discovered by the attentive student.

3. *Audience and use*

I have just stated that the testimonies serve to emphasize a Christian worldview—'for Christians'. This raises questions about the intended audience of many of the early Arabic Christian apologetic texts. Our *Apology* is formally addressed to Muslims: again and again the author says, 'You will find it in the Qur'an',[56] or 'in your Book',[57] and asks rhetorically, 'Why do you fault us when we believe …'[58] followed by a specific Christian doctrine. Harris was impressed by this Muslim-directed character of the text. In his review of Gibson's edition, he criticized the title she had given to the treatise, *On the Triune Nature of God*. Seeing the continuity between the Arabic apology and the *testimonia*-collections of the earlier literature *Contra Judaeos*, he suggested that the treatise should simply be called *Contra Muhammedanos*.[59]

Now, Harris' suggestion for a title fails on more than one account. In the first place, the text is not *against* anyone; it is almost entirely free of polemic. But, in the second place, his suggestion probably exaggerates the extent to which debate with Muslims was, in fact, the principal setting of the text.

In the introduction to her Italian translation of the *Apology*, Sr Maria Gallo offers the following judgment: 'In my opinion, the analysis of the text leads us to conclude that the author is speaking to Christians and that the Muslim-directed discourse is simply a literary device meant to give greater liveliness and concreteness to his words.'[60] Her judgment regarding the Arabic *Apology* is echoed by some of the most recent scholarship on the patristic *testimonia*-collections, which have conventionally been understood as tools for Christian debate with Jews. After surveying the sources in a recent

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[56] Ibid., ff. 101v, 102r, 108r, and 112r.

[57] Ibid., f. 108r. Cf. 'As you bear witness', f. 118r.

[58] Ibid., f. 101v (on believing in God, his Word and his Spirit); f. 118r (on believing that Christ is God from God).

[59] Harris, 'A Tract', p. 75 = *Testimonies*, vol. I, p. 40.

[60] Gallo, *Omelia arabo-cristiana*, p. 18.

monograph, Martin C. Albl concludes:

> This patristic survey has uncovered no indisputable evidence that the *testimonia* were used in actual debates with Jews. Already in the *Dialogue with Trypho*, the form of the dialogue between a Jew and a Christian seems to be a literary fiction; the aim was to instruct Christians or persuade a pagan audience. The overwhelming evidence points towards the development of these *testimonia*-collections in a catechetical life-setting.[61]

Is what we have then, in the transition of *testimonia*-collections from Greek and Syriac to Arabic, a move from one literary fiction (debate with Jews) to another (debate with Muslims)? This may overstate the case. A work such as the Arabic *Apology* may have been valuable, as Gallo points out, to Christians who were being challenged in their faith by their Muslim neighbors.[62] Its author may also have had in mind arabophone Christians whose faith was wavering in the early Abbasid period. For them, the *Apology* may have been intended as a powerful statement of a comprehensive and integrated scriptural universe that—the author implies—they should be loathe to abandon.

4. *Apologetic moves*

I believe it likely that the principal audience of much of the early Melkite 'apologetic' literature, and especially those works most influenced by *testimonia*-collections, would have been Christians. It was *Christian* readers who would have been moved by demonstrations of the coherence between the Old Testament and the New, and who may have delighted in the apologists' skill in the pious sport of discovering new correspondences. In reading the scriptural testimonies, a Christian reader could see the weaving of a worldview, like a great tent. A question that remains is: Would a Muslim have any desire to peer inside that tent? It seems to me that the authors of the texts considered here do attempt to provide what they believed might be windows or gateways for Muslims to look—or even enter—into the Christian worldview. A few examples follow, again with a focus on the second/eighth-century *Apology*.

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[61] Albl, *'And Scripture Cannot Be Broken'*, p. 158. For Albl's discussion of the *First Apology* and the *Dialogue with Trypho* of Justin Martyr, see ibid., pp. 101-6.

[62] Gallo, *Omelia arabo-cristiana*, p. 18.

a. *Torah, Prophets, Psalms, Gospel: 'the books God has sent down'*
While the author of the *Apology* can sometimes quote the Bible without appealing to its revealed status, he does appeal to his Muslim reader to pay attention to his scriptural quotations *because they come from the Books that God has sent down*. Very early in his treatise, with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, he writes:

> God has explicated [*bayyana*] his affair and his light in the *Tawrāt*, the Prophets, the *Zabūr* and the *Injīl*—that God and his Word and his Spirit are one God and one Lord. We shall explicate that, God willing, by means of these revealed [*munzala*] Books, for the sake of the one who desires knowledge, has insight into matters, recognizes the truth, and opens his heart so as to believe in God and his Books.[63]

The author knows that the Qur'an speaks of God sending down the *Tawrāt* or Torah to Moses, the *Zabūr* or Psalms to David, and the *Injīl* or Gospel to Jesus. Furthermore, he knows of the Qur'an's acceptance of God's prophets. At this early stage of the history of Christian-Muslim conversation he makes bold to claim: the Christian community possesses these Books of which the Qur'an speaks, and so Muslims should pay attention to what they teach.

With regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, the author of the *Apology* proceeds to provide one example from each of the four sources he mentioned. From the *Tawrāt* he quotes the beginning of Genesis, in which God, God's Spirit and God's Word are all clearly mentioned (Gen 1.1-3), and in which God speaks in the first person plural (Gen 1.26, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness…').[64] From the Prophets he quotes the hymn of the seraphim in Isaiah's vision, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts' (Is 6.3), with its threefold ascription of holiness to the one strong Lord.[65] From the *Zabūr* he quotes Ps 29.3: 'The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders; the Lord, upon the mighty waters'—a passage that had already long seen by Church teachers as a prophesy of the baptism of Christ, as described in the Gospels (that is, for our author, in the *Injīl*).[66] 'The voice of the

[63] SA 154, ff. 99v-100r.
[64] Ibid., ff. 100r, 101v.
[65] Ibid., f. 99v.
[66] Ibid., f. 102r-v. It might be noted that Psalm 29 is still regularly read in many churches on the Feast of the Holy Trinity, although I very much doubt that many

Lord … over the waters' is that of the Father; 'the God of glory' who comes down from heaven like thunder is the Holy Spirit; and 'the Lord upon the waters' is Christ being baptized by John in the River Jordan.

At the very end of the treatise (as we presently have it), in the chapter on the cross, its author makes another strong appeal to Muslim readers to take heed of what God has 'sent down' to his prophet Moses in the *Tawrāt*:

> Moses prophesied, to whom God spoke and caused his face to blaze [so that] none of the Children of Israel were able to look at his face. He prophesied concerning the crucifixion of Christ, and said to the Children of Israel in the *Tawrāt*, which God sent down to him: 'You shall see your life hanging before your eyes, and you shall not believe.'[67]

The quotation is from the Septuagint version of Deuteronomy 28.66, a favorite patristic 'prophesy' of the crucifixion of Christ, the Life of the world who on the cross was hanging before the eyes of unbelievers.[68] This testimony is followed by another from the Pentateuch, the story of the bronze serpent in the wilderness (Num 21.6-9), which already in the New Testament was seen as a type of the crucifixion of Christ (John 3.14-15).[69] A third testimony in the chapter comes not from the Pentateuch but from the prophet Zechariah (12.10b), but it too is prefaced with a strong claim of divine origin: 'And God said in his Books: "They shall look on the one whom they have pierced."'[70]

b. *The Bible and the Qur'an in agreement*

It is worth noting that the author of the *Apology*, whenever possible, does not simply quote the Bible with the assumption that a Muslim reader will accept it as a text that God has sent down, but rather supplements his biblical presentation with appropriate quotations from the Qur'an. Thus, with respect to the Trinity: the Qur'an like

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churchgoers today make a connection between verse 3 and the Gospels' story of the baptism of Jesus.

[67] Ibid., f. 137r-v.

[68] J. Daniélou, 'Das Leben, das am Holze hängt: Dt 28,66 in der altchristlichen Katechese', in J. Betz and H. Fries, eds, *Kirche und Überlieferung, Festschrift für Jospeh Rupert Geiselmann*, Freiburg/Br., 1960, pp. 22-34.

[69] SA 154, ff. 137v-139r.

[70] Ibid., f. 139r.

the Bible speaks of God and God's Word and the Spirit; furthermore, in the Qur'an as in the Bible, God sometimes speaks in the first person plural.[71] With regard to the story of human redemption, qur'anic vocabulary and phrases may be interwoven with biblical ones in telling the stories of Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham and Lot, Moses, John the Baptist, the Virgin Mary, and Christ himself. The impression given is that there is a complementarity between the Bible and the Qur'an, and that there are qur'anic trajectories that, properly perceived and followed, lead one deep into the biblical world.

c. *Bible and* Kalām

Finally, as we move from the second/eighth-century *Apology* to the apologetic treatises of Theodore Abū Qurra, there is an increase of complexity in the kinds of arguments designed to induce a Muslim to take the biblical worldview seriously, as *kalām* elements combine with or even replace scriptural ones.[72] Here I would like to call attention to Abū Qurra's little treatise *On the Divine Son*,[73] the third part of a set including *On the Necessity of Redemption* and *On the Possibility of Incarnation*.[74] The text provides an especially good example of the disjunctive logic of the *kalām*: proceeding with a series of dilemma-questions, Abū Qurra demonstrates to his satisfaction that (1) God has the attribute of 'headship', (2) which is not merely over creatures (3) but over what is *equal to* God (4) *by nature*.[75] But now, we see how the *kalām*-argument is designed to carry the reader along into the biblical world. The one who is equal to God by nature over whom God has 'headship' is … the divine Son. After responding to two objections, Abū Qurra concludes his treatise with what he calls a *better* confirmation of the divine Son: a set of sixteen Old Testament *testimonia* that bear witness to him (thirteen of which, incidentally, are found in Book Three of *Al-burhān*). A *kalām*-argument has been used to create a gateway, or at least a window, into

[71] SA 154, ff. 101v-102r.

[72] In his treatise *On the Trinity*, Abū Qurra suggests that the reader should first work through his proof for Christianity as the true *religion*; having accepted that, one can then turn to the Bible as the true *scripture*; Bacha, *Mayāmir*, pp. 26-7.

[73] Ibid., pp. 91-104.

[74] Ibid., pp. 83-91 and 180-6 respectively.

[75] Ibid., pp. 91-4.

a Christian worldview, in which the tightly interwoven scriptures of Old and New Testament provide the overarching meta-narrative which provides answers to fundamental questions, and within which life is given shape by rituals, symbols and patterns of behavior and action.

Did Muslims read Abū Qurra's treatise? Perhaps a few. It has been the contention of this essay, however, that texts such as the anonymous *Apology* or Theodore Abū Qurra's *On the Divine Son* probably had their primary home in Christian catechesis, where they emphasized the beauty and livability of the Christian worldview—and perhaps, thereby, played some role in slowing the process of conversion to Islam that was gaining momentum in the first Abbasid century.[76]

[76] On rates of conversion, see R.W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History*, Cambridge MA, 1979.

THE RE-WRITTEN BIBLE IN ARABIC: THE PARADISE STORY AND ITS EXEGESIS IN THE ARABIC *APOCALYPSE OF PETER*

EMMANOUELA GRYPEOU

Pseudepigraphical literary production in Arabic played a major role in the transmission of biblical material, and it formed the scriptural knowledge of the Arab speaking Christian communities long before the Bible was fully translated into Arabic. One of the most important features and functions of pseudepigraphical literature is its contribution not only to the formation of a general biblical background, but also to knowledge of the biblical canon in an eclectic as well as summarized way by including material both from the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The pseudepigraphical textual tradition transmitted basic knowledge of scripture not only before but sometimes even beyond the authorized translations of the books of the Bible. It provided the Christian communities with an extensive scriptural foundation, necessary for the understanding of their own religious, and in particular confessional, identity.

In this article I shall discuss one of the earliest and most monumental pseudepigraphical works in Arabic, known as the *Apocalypse of Peter*. This was perhaps the first pseudepigraphon to be written—at least in part—originally in Arabic. I will focus in particular on the text, as edited and translated by Alfonse Mingana in 1931, which is based on a *Karshuni* manuscript from his own manuscript collection.[1]

The work consists of three main sections. It is very probably a compilation of writings, and the three parts of it must have originated

[1] Mingana Syr. 70: see A. Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies*, vol. III, Cambridge, 1931, pp. 70f. The numerous manuscripts of the work bear evidence of its great popularity, up to the late Middle Ages. On the popularity of the text in western and eastern Christianity, see G. Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* vol. I (*Studi et Testi* 118), Vatican, 1944, p. 288, and F. Nau, 'Clementins (Apocryphes) II: L'apocalypse de Pierre ou Clément', in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, 1906-8, vol. III, pp. 216ff. On the manuscript tradition see E. Bratke, ‚Handschriftliche Überlieferung des Petrus Apokalypse', *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 36.1, 1893, pp. 454-93.

in different historical periods. The first part was originally edited and translated by Margaret Dunlop Gibson based on a Sinai manuscript that was dated to the tenth century at the latest.[2] Gibson entitled her translation: *Kitāb al-Magāll or the Book of the Rolls one of the Books of Clement*. Due to the existence of this edition, Mingana left this section out of his own edition. The second part, with which the Mingana text begins, contains an extensive narration of heavenly and eschatological secrets, while the last part consists primarily of a political apocalypse.[3] These last two parts were dubbed by Mingana the *Apocalypse of Peter*.[4]

As the text is a collection of eschatological and apocalyptic revelations, it does not contain any specific references to historical events other than cryptic allusions to the Muslims.[5] Hence the dating of the text proves to be a very difficult task and it can be only of a speculative character.

Interestingly, there are references to Church customs that indicate a Coptic origin for the text.[6] The existing text could therefore sup-

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[2] See M.D. Gibson, *Studia Sinaitica, VIII. Apocrypha Arabica*, London, 1901, p. x. See also Graf, *GCAL*, p. 283. Mingana dates the same MS 'to about the middle of the ninth century' (*Woodbrooke Studies*, p. 93).

[3] See B. Roggema's contribution to this volume. My analysis of the work does not take into consideration this third part in matters of origin or dating.

[4] In the following for the sake of convention I shall refer to the text edited by Gibson as *The Book of the Rolls*, and to the text edited by Mingana, as the *Apocalypse of Peter I* for the eschatological section (Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies*, pp. 93-152 [trans.]), and *Apocalypse of Peter II* for the political apocalyptic section (Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies*, pp. 209-82 [trans.]).

[5] A. Dillmann, 'Bericht über das aethiopische Buch clementinischer Schriften', in *Nachrichten von der Georg-August-Universität und der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, 1858, pp. 185-226, argued for an Egyptian origin of a definitely Monophysite text, which was composed originally in Arabic in the middle of the second/eighth century. Mingana, notes: 'As the work stands in these MSS. it appears to me to be a genuine but composite Arabic lubrication with different layers of antiquity, a true *mixum compositum*. The first and the most ancient of these Arabic layers I am tempted to ascribe to about A.D. 800' (*Woodbrooke Studies*, p. 98).

[6] See especially the references to circumcision (Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies*, p. 118). On the practice of circumcision among Copts, see O.F.A. Meinardus, *Two Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity*, Cairo and New York, 1999, p. 98. Dillmann describes the text as 'ein Denkmal aus der Mitte des achten Jahrhunderts, das uns einen Einblick gewährt in den Zustand der damaligen Christenheit und in die Gefühle und Anschauungen, welche sie bewegten' ('Bericht über das aethiopische Buch clementinischer Schriften', p. 217). E. Bratke, in agreement with Dillmann, adds that Egypt was the main production place of apocalypses ('Die handschriftliche Überlieferung', p. 491). Also *Secreta Petri* were read in Egypt during the church services (ibid., p. 405). About

port the hypothesis of an Egyptian origin for Christian pseudepigraphical literature written originally in Arabic.[7]

Christian pseudepigraphical literature in Arabic has not yet been studied in its entirety. There are still a significant number of texts that remain unpublished or that exist in old and often inadequate editions and have been generally neglected by modern scholarship. Consequently, we do not yet have a fully developed picture of the scriptural traditions that have been influential and/or relevant for Arab Christian communities.

A significant aspect of pseudepigraphical literature consists in the re-writing of the Bible; it presents an extension and explanation of the biblical story by illustrating details of biblical statements about the nature of the world and of humankind. The narrative motifs reflect various exegetical approaches to the biblical passages. Often borrowed from older texts, they form part of a long-established literary tradition. The choice of literary motifs or textual traditions used in the composition of texts in a new language is revealing with respect to the self-perception, intentions and concerns of a specific community in history. Based on the existing textual evidence, the first chapters of the book of Genesis were among the most popular biblical stories in Arab Christian pseudepigraphical literature.

In the following, I will focus in particular on the biblical creation and paradise story in the *Apocalypse of Peter I*.[8] I will argue that the presentation and analysis of the opening chapters of the biblical canon reflect the new historical situation for the Christians in the Islamic lands.[9]

Peter's importance in Egypt, see K. Berger, 'Unfehlbare Offenbarung. Petrus in der gnostischen und apokalyptischen Offenbarungsliteratur', in P.-G. Müller and W. Stenger, eds, *Kontinuität und Einheit: für Franz Mussner*, Freiburg. 1981, pp. 261-326. As he notes about Egypt: 'es gibt nur einen Bischof, und der geht auf Petrus zurück' (p. 275). Finally, our text's dependence on the Revelation of John might also be another indication for Egyptian origin, considering the popularity of this book in the Coptic Church until the present time. I owe this reference to Professor Rifaat Ebied.

[7] Cf. R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, Princeton NJ, 1997: 'All scholars agree that Arabic was the original language, yet we have no Christian Arabic writings from such an early date' (p. 293).

[8] See n. 4.

[9] As P.J. Alexander writes: 'Once the obstacles to historical interpretation and exploitation of apocalypses are removed, these texts may yield a rich crop of information of all kinds' ('Medieval apocalypses as historical sources', *American Historical Review* 73, 1968, [pp. 997-1018] p. 1017).

The Paradise story is to be found in two different versions in the *Book of the Rolls* and in the *Apocalypse of Peter I*. The two versions present two different and varying approaches to the theological, anthropological and soteriological issues involved in the narration of the Paradise story. The *Book of the Rolls* is more or less a translation and expansion of the Syriac *Cave of Treasures*, while the *Apocalypse of Peter I* is a more original composition, presenting a variety of new motifs and ideas.

The Book of the Rolls

The *Book of the Rolls* is said to be the sixth book of Clement of Rome. It reports a revelation of Jesus as given to Peter the Apostle, and then transmitted to Clement by Peter. According to the literary classification of pseudepigraphical literature, the text belongs roughly to the pseudo-Clementine literature on account of the narrative frame that is used.[10]

The *Book of the Rolls* is a compendium of major biblical stories mainly from the Old Testament, focussing on genealogies and ending with the genealogy of Mary and a defence of Mary's virginity.

Clement asks for Peter's help in the struggle with the Jews, who question him about the genealogy of Mary and the creation of Adam, and reproach him for failing to understand the Torah. Peter, who is described here as the chief of the Apostles, reveals to Clement the secrets that he has received from Jesus. These include a detailed description of each day of the creation, basic information about the nature of the Godhead and the nature of the angels according to their various ranks, the creation of Adam and Eve and a description of Paradise.[11] Finally, it narrates the story of the transgression and fall of Adam and Eve. The fall, as related in the

[10] On the Pseudo-Clementine literature in general, see J. Irmscher and G. Stecker, 'Die Pseudoklementinen', in E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, *NT Apokryphen* II, Tübingen, 1997, pp. 439ff. The choice of this narrative frame is interesting. It might indicate a situation in which the church was struggling for its authority. As Klaus Berger remarks: 'Mit Petrus ist die Frage nach der höchsten "kirchlichen" Autorität gestellt, und mit seiner Rolle als Offenbarungsträger und Geheimnisempfänger nach dem Verhältnis von Autorität und Erkenntnis überhaupt' ('Unfehlbare Offenbarung', p. 267).

[11] For the following, see Gibson, *Studia Sinaitica*, pp. 6ff.

Book of the Rolls, comes about as a result of the Devil's envy of the superiority of Adam, who is the king, priest and prophet ministering in Eden, the church of God.

Satanael, also called Devil, Satan and Ibīs, the prince-angel from the highest rank of the angels, is responsible for the deception and seduction of Eve. Eve, who is already married to Adam in Paradise, convinces Adam to eat from the forbidden fruit so that he might become like God. Eventually, Adam and Eve are deprived of their glory and forced to leave Paradise in great grief. However, God shows His mercy for Adam and reassures him that only Eve and not he, Adam, is cursed and promises to send his 'beloved Son' to earth with a body from a Virgin, purified by God, for Adam's salvation.

The text stresses the foreknowledge of God regarding the Devil's deception, but the description of Paradise betrays a certain dualistic view of the world, while at the same time integrating several motifs from the Syriac exegetical tradition, due to its close dependency on the Syriac *Cave of Treasures*.

The Arabic Apocalypse of Peter I

The *Arabic Apocalypse of Peter I* is a revelation dialogue between the resurrected Christ and Peter, narrated by Peter to Clement, which Clement writes down in rolls. The setting of the text, following common pseudepigraphical motifs, is the Mount of Olives.[12]

The *Arabic Apocalypse of Peter I* opens with Clement questioning Peter. What follows is more or less a continuation of the *Book of the Rolls*. Clement reports to Peter that he is now able to refute the Jews, but he still needs to know the heavenly secrets as revealed to

[12] The backdrop of the revelation of the Mount of Olives is also the setting of the early Christian text known as the *Apocalypse of Peter*, or the Ethiopic *Apocalypse of Peter*, as it is extant in Ethiopic, although it was very probably originally composed in Greek. A Coptic version of the text exists as well. It was composed very probably in Egypt in the first half of the second century and the translation into Ethiopic must have been made through an Arabic translation. See, C.D.G. Müller in Hennecke and Scheemelcher, *NT Apokryphen* II, pp. 562ff. Compared with the Arabic text of the same name, this text is more concerned with eschatological questions, the Last Judgment and the torments of hell. The two Peter apocalypses share an interest in the eschatological realities, in paradise and hell in general, although not necessarily in the details of the description. Accordingly, there is only an indirect relation between the two texts.

him by Christ. This introduction is significant for the diverse intentions of the two texts. The *Book of the Rolls* focuses for the large part on biblical history and genealogy, and it appears to serve as a general background for the more esoteric teachings that are to be revealed now in the *Apocalypse of Peter I*. The latter understands itself explicitly as the revelation of hidden heavenly secrets that are not included in Scripture, as Christ says to Peter: 'Know that I have not imparted to Moses in the matter of the history of creation what I am imparting to you.'[13] The revelation of esoteric teachings bears a significant theological implication. Peter is presented as superior to Moses' authority. Only he is endowed with the real divine truth.[14] Accordingly, Moses' revelation is lacking and insufficient.

The text deals mainly with the following fundamental questions of Christian faith: why God created Adam knowing about the transgression that would take place; why Christ became incarnate; why there is life and death and what is after death; what is the meaning of the soul; why God promised resurrection; the knowledge of the hierarchies of the heavenly beings; what will happen in heaven on the day of the resurrection; the end of the world; the state of Paradise and of the Kingdom of Heaven.[15]

The *Apocalypse of Peter I* text does not dwell on details about the creation of the world, but focuses on the description of Paradise, on the nature and different ranks of the angels, on God's nature, on Adam's relation to God and on Christ's incarnation. It deals further with particular theological questions such as Christ's pre-existence in God. The Son is identified with the Creator, and so when Christ speaks of any divine creative or other action, he uses the first person plural. Christ mentions certain episodes from the Old Testament as the actions performed by himself and God or the united Godhead in order to underline His pre-existence.[16] Throughout the text, canonical material about the nature of God from the Old Testa-

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[13] See Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies*, p. 128.

[14] Peter's importance and revelatory authority are stressed throughout the *Apocalypse of Peter I*, see for example 'The mysteries of my mercy are not known, and not comprehended, and no tongue is able to speak of them. I shall, however, reveal to you those of them that I know your mind and intelligence can comprehend, because I have given you the keys of heaven and earth, and have shown you their doors so that you might open them and close them at your will' (Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies*, p. 125).

[15] Ibid, p. 100.

[16] Ibid, pp. 105ff. cf. 1 Cor 8.6; Col 1.16.

ment, as well as from the New Testament (mainly from the Gospel of John), is quoted eclectically. Jesus stresses that he and the Father are not 'associates', because there is no separation in them. This statement might reflect an implicit refutation of Islamic polemic against Christian trinitarian theology.[17]

The paradise-story is narrated as part of God's plan, and a special emphasis is put on God's foreknowledge; as Jesus explains: 'None of my creatures is able to revolt against one or to serve me except by my will.'[18]

The 'Archon',[19] as Satan is called here, rebelled against God because of his pride and arrogance. The fall and the punishment of the Archon were part of God's plan so as to set an example for others who would revolt against Him. The Archon was initially placed higher than the other hierarchies of the angels in a position assigned by God, so that there would not be an excuse for him to say: 'I rebelled against you because you have placed the others higher.'[20] With this motif, our text clearly sets itself apart from all the traditions that are common in the Jewish and Christian pseudepigraphical tradition that explain Satan's rebellion as an envious reaction to the superiority of Adam.[21]

The creation of Adam was necessary for the redemption of the world, as he was created to stand up against the Rebel. From his posterity good, pious people would rise to fill the angelic hierarchy from which Satan had fallen. As ruler over the earth, Adam was created angelic, spiritual and immortal, but he was also created

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[17] Cf. Q 5.72; see also John of Damascus, *De Haeresibus*, 100.4: 'Καλοῦσι δὲ ἡμᾶς ἑταιριαστὰς, ὅτι, φησίν, ἑταῖρον τῷ θεῷ παρεισάγομεν λέγοντες εἶναι τὸν Χριστὸν υἱὸν θεοῦ καὶ θεόν'. (R. Le Coz, *Écrits sur l'Islam* (*SC* 383), Paris, 1992, p. 216).

[18] See Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies*, p. 116.

[19] 'Archōn' is the Greek word for 'prince' or 'ruler'; cf. 1 Cor 2.6.8.

[20] Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies*, p. 130.

[21] These traditions that were actually the common explanations in the pseudepigraphical tradition and are to be found in texts such as the *Life of Adam and Eve* (12-17), the *Cave of Treasures* (3,1-7), and finally, in the Qur'an (Q 7.11-17; 38. 72-4). A. Toepel, 'Die Adam- und Seth-Legenden im syrischen *Buch der Schatzhöhle*', unpublished PhD Dissertation, Tübingen 2005, suggests that: 'In der arab. Übers. wird dieser Abschnitt umgestaltet, wobei das Motiv der Weigerung Satans, Adam anzuebeten, fehlt (....) weshalb vermutet werden kann, dass es sich bei den Abweichungen des arab. Textes um nachträgliche Änderungen des arab. Textes handelt. Da das *arab. Ps.-Clementinum* zu islamischer Zeit entstand, besteht die Möglichkeit, dass der betreffende Abschnitt der *Schatzhöhle* aufgrund der Ähnlichkeiten mit der koranischen Darstellung des Engelsturzes (..) entfernt wurde' (p. 69, n. 7).

mortal with free will. Thus, he possessed originally a double nature, mortal and immortal, because God knew that he would transgress the commandment.[22] The creation of the mortal nature of Adam was part of the fulfilment of Jesus' incarnation, while the immortal nature would serve the restoration of the primordial state of paradise for the faithful. As Christ claims in the text: 'I created Adam because of my incarnation and I will return him to Paradise in the body which he had when he was driven out.'[23]

Adam was warned against rebellion and, particularly, not to eat from the tree of death as he would be deprived of the Eden of delight. His rebellion meant death for the earthly and mortal nature. According to this version of the Paradise story, Adam ate from the tree because he wished to be God and he deserved death because he disobeyed God, in spite of his intelligence, and warnings against disobedience.

Adam's intelligence and free will make him fully accountable for his decision to disobey God. In this text, which claims to be the true esoteric explanation of the biblical story, the motif of Eve as the person mainly responsible for the fall, as well as the seduction by the serpent/Devil, are missing. The deception of Satan is mentioned, but the responsibility still lies entirely with Adam's judgment and free will.[24]

The creation of Adam and Eve fulfils a soteriological function in God's *Heilsplan*, in the divine economy. God has created Adam and Eve and the world because of his incarnation, so that his preexistence, majesty and glory might become manifest.[25] He has approached mankind because of His love for the world. Finally, he became incarnate in order to raise bodies from the grave and to give them eternal life.

This text presents one of the most extensive, detailed and vivid descriptions of Paradise to be found in Jewish or Christian pseudepigraphical texts. Paradise was created from the Eden of delight.

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[22] See Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies*, p. 126.

[23] Ibid., p. 132.

[24] Cf. texts such as the Life of Adam and Eve, where the blame is only on Eve. As J.H. Charlesworth, 'Introduction for the General Reader', in J.H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, New York, 1983, vol. I, notes: 'The source of guilt shifts completely from Eve to Adam first in 4th Ezra' (p. xxx).

[25] See Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies*, p. 123.

The Garden of Eden is the dwelling place of the angels, and was created along with the angels. It is the house of God's mercy, where there is no darkness.[26] Paradise and Eden have three doors. The third door opens to Mount Sinai, the second door to the Mount of Olives, and the first door, which is the highest, leads to the burial ground of the body that Jesus took from Adam. From this door, God hears and answers prayers. This 'direct' communication with the faithful was another reason for the Incarnation.

Paradise is under God's Throne, where there are places of delight and rivers of light. The description of God's throne is strongly reminiscent of the Revelation of John. Remarkably, motifs from John's Revelation are used in a description of the beginning of the creation, thus uniting protology and eschatology in the theological exegetical concept of the text.

Paradise is made after the image of the Church, prepared in heaven for the so-called 'marked virgins'.[27] This pre-established Church is called accordingly 'The Church of the Faithful Virgins'. From this place the Archon, the Devil, was driven out.

Paradise is the place of reward for people who have attained merit through their good works. Perhaps in contrast to Islamic descriptions of Paradise, according to our text it 'contains neither winter, nor summer, nor the perishable concupiscence of the world. It has neither food nor drink, because its breeze satisfies the souls. The dwellers therein have no sinful thoughts, nor do they delight in sin. There is in it no hunger and no thirst, and its inmates are in no need of garments as there is no shame in nakedness.'[28]

The Kingdom of Heaven is even greater than Paradise.[29] Anyone who is worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven first experiences the pleasures of the gardens of Paradise. These are the believers who are baptized and confess the faith and avoid sinning. They will be showered with endless happiness.

The extensive description of places such as Paradise, Eden and the Kingdom of Heaven expresses a basic theological and pastoral intention of reinforcing the perseverance of the righteous Christians

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[26] Ibid, p. 135.
[27] Ibid, p. 127.
[28] Ibid, p. 137. Cf. Q 47.15, 56.12-39, 18.31.
[29] See Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies*, pp. 137f.

in anticipation of rewards in the afterlife.

A considerable part of the text deals with the events at the last Resurrection, when it is stressed that the faithful, and especially those who have suffered persecution, will be rewarded, purified and become like the angels of heaven.[30] On the day of the Resurrection, the souls of the believers will go to the Church of the Heavenly Jerusalem that is established by the Father in the name of Christ.[31] The idea of the heavenly Jerusalem which is built in the third heaven over the earthly Jerusalem corresponds to the description of the heavenly Jerusalem in John's Revelation. The heavenly Jerusalem is the Altar and the Sanctuary of life, where the liturgy never ends. The description of the heavenly Jerusalem emphasizes the interest in liturgical life which can be observed throughout the text.

The interest in the observance of Christian everyday practice is also expressed through the incorporation in the text of another pseudepigraphon, known as the *Testament of Adam*.[32] This work determines why, how and when individual piety and prayer can and should be practised. In the so-called *Horarium* of this text, the hours and numbers of prayers are precisely defined and explained according to episodes from the Paradise story, such as the creation of Adam, his rebellion against God and his expulsion from Paradise.

The number of daily prayers for the people is three, while for the ascetics it should be seven. This tradition corresponds to the long-established tradition of the Prayers of the Hours. The concern about liturgical life, which is here described as divinely ordered and corresponding directly to heavenly mysteries, might derive from a milieu in which there was a concern to preserve liturgical life intact,

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[30] This idea most probably reflects the monastic ideal of the *vita angelica*, going back to Mk 12.25; cf. P. Nagel, *Die Motivierung der Askese in der alten Kirche und der Ursprung des Mönchtums*, Berlin, 1966, pp. 34-48.

[31] See Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies*, p. 141.

[32] Ibid., pp. 111ff. The *Testament of Adam* was originally composed in Syriac between the second and the fifth centuries AD. See S.E. Robinson, 'The Testament of Adam', in J.H. Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. I, pp. 989-95 and S.E. Robinson, *The Testament of Adam: An Examination of Syriac and Greek Traditions*, Chico CA, 1982. Apart from the *Horarium*, the Angelic Hierarchy as described in this text also bears close resemblance to our text. The frame of a dialogue between Adam and his son, Seth, has been left out and it appears as an independent discourse by Christ, who also gives a short description in this context of Jesus' birth and life. There is also a theological affinity between the two texts considering God's/Jesus' role in Adam's redemption after the fall.

emphasizing the immediate relevance and importance of the observance of Christian practices for the preservation of the faith. This could in fact point to a clerical-monastic milieu behind the text.

The text concludes with apocalyptic visions about the signs of the end of the world, which are strongly influenced by the Revelation of John.

The Arabic Apocalypse of Peter I and Islam

According to its narrative frame this text technically belongs, as already mentioned above, to the pseudo-Clementine literature. The choice of the pseudo-Clementine narrative frame might imply an emphasis on the authority and unity of the Church, as founded by Peter. Considering its contents, however, it has little in common with the texts known as the 'pseudo-Clementines'. Rather, it is more closely related to Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature. As with Jewish and Christian pseudepigraphical literature in general, the texts of these traditions depend upon each other. Later Christian apocalyptic literature, as part of a long literary tradition, is based in great part on the two canonical apocalyptic texts, the Book of Daniel and the Revelation of John. In some respects, this body of literature builds a closed self-referring literary system. The texts of a younger date intentionally use basic motifs from the older texts that have been authoritative or even canonicised, as a means to acquire authority and trustworthiness for their own prophetic revelation.

In this context, the concept of history, which leads inevitably to the consummation of the world, is basically linear. The course of world history consists of ever-recurring themes that precede and forebode the final act of the eschatological drama.

The eclectic choice that the *Apocalypse of Peter I* makes here from the older pseudepigraphical literature is significant. In contrast with the usual tradition of pseudepigraphical literature, it does not copy or imitate an older popular text, but presents an original compilation of passages, ideas and motifs from a number of texts, which are, I suggest, carefully chosen in order to support and illustrate the main theme of the text.

The scope of the text is the revelation of heavenly mysteries about the beginning and the end of creation, but to my mind this text uses these literary motifs to express a specific reaction to Is-

lamic rule. In a certain way it is a theological confrontation, even if only a latent one here, with Islam. I believe the *Apocalypse of Peter I* presents the metaphysical eschatological background of the political apocalypse in the *Apocalypse of Peter II* that follows later in the same manuscript. It explains how the truth about the Christian faith and the Church has been revealed already in the first chapters of the Bible and how it therefore determines the course of history which is divinely planned.

Although this text is not openly a political apocalypse, it has much in common with political apocalypses in Arabic that also originated in Egypt, such as Pseudo-Athanasius, Samuel of Qalamun, etc.,[33] as it is concerned with the fate of the Church and of the believers. And it seeks to strengthen their faith and encourage them to endurance by promising the Kingdom of Heaven and by dwelling on descriptions of the rewards and of the delights of Eden.

The *Book of the Rolls*, on the other hand, can be regarded as translation-literature, which did not serve any further explicit political issues. While in the *Book of the Rolls*, the opponents are said to be the Jews, certain allusions in the *Arabic Apocalypse of Peter I* imply that the esoteric teachings here are part of a confrontation with Islam.

Thus, the inclusion of the *Book of the Rolls* in this collection of texts can be seen as providing a contrasting background to the *Apocalypse of Peter I*, which offers a new version of the Paradise story with the viewpoint of new eschatological signs such as Islamic rule.

The direct confrontation with Islam takes place in a more political-historical context in the third part of the text, although the Arabic *Apocalypse of Peter I* presents the necessary theological context for the understanding of the following section with its political and historical emphasis.

The new political and historical situation demands a new revelation, which is disclosed here in the characteristically 'esoteric' *Apocalypse of Peter I*. While our text remains faithful to the literary traditions of the relevant pseudepigraphical literature, it seeks to re-invent and re-interpret them in order to adapt them to a new historical period and ultimately through a new linguistic medium.

It seems probable that a text like the *Arabic Apocalypse of Peter I*

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[33] For a general overview of these texts, see R. Hoyland, 'Copto-Arabic texts', in *Seeing Islam*, pp. 278ff.

could have been written under the real and imminent threat of conversions and defections. Against this background it is not surprising that Christ should state to Peter: 'Be assured, O Peter, (…) that I am the 'Son of the living God',[34] or in an even more radical tone: 'Beware of rebelling against me, because I am a jealous God.'[35]

The Revelation of John[36] and the Fourth Book of Ezra,[37] two texts that show considerable similarities with each other and were both composed in times of persecution, appear to be the main sources of inspiration for the *Apocalypse of Peter I.*

In the third vision of the Fourth Book of Ezra, after the seer has narrated briefly the events of each of the six days of creation, he concludes:

> And over these you placed Adam as ruler over all the works which you had made; and from him we have all come, the people from whom you have chosen.
> All this I have spoken to you, O Lord, because you have said that it was for us that you created this world. (…) And now, O Lord, these other nations, which are reputed as nothing, domineer over us and devour us. But we your people, (…) have been given into their hands. If the world has indeed been created for us, why do we not possess our world as an inheritance? How long will this be so? (6.54-9)

The *Apocalypse of Peter I* reflects this fundamental question posed by Ezra. According to the text, Peter will spiritually beget children of chastity and asceticism. They will have superiority over all nations, but will suffer under their enemies.[38]

Literally it says:

> And my Lord said: 'O Peter, how numerous will be the troubles that will befall my followers at the hand of my enemies, the children of the tares, who are the inhabitants of the South and the followers of

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[34] Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies*, p. 121.

[35] Ibid., p. 119.

[36] On the influence of the Revelation of John on this body of literature in general, see J.P. Monferrer Sala, 'Tipologia Apocaliptica en la literatura árabe cristiana', in *Ilu. Rivista de Ciencias de las Religiones* 4, 2001, pp. 61f.

[37] The Fourth Book of Ezra, originally a Jewish pseudepigraphon of a strong political character bewailing Israel's fate, was later set into a Christian framework. It might have been composed in the first century AD in Greek or Aramaic, but versions of it exist also in Latin, Syriac, Ethiopic, Armenian, Arabic, Coptic, Georgian, and a small fragment in Greek. See B. Metzger, 'The Fourth Book of Ezra', in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, [pp. 517-59] pp. 521ff.

[38] Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies*, p. 152.

> the Apostle of the Archon! Indeed they will suffer innumerable torments from them, but blessed are those who will endure hardships for my sake…[39]

As Mingana notes: 'This sentence clearly refers to the Muslim Arabs who come from the South. The "Apostle of the Archon" seems also to designate Muḥammad, and means "Apostle of the Satan", in contrast with "Apostle of God", as the Prophet of Islam is called.'[40]

The text is accordingly very explicit about the people who will be able to enter the heavenly church: these are the believers 'which are cleansed in the water of baptism, which are marked with the sign of the Cross and which disbelieve in the treatise of the son of the wolf'.[41] The 'son of the wolf' appears to be another name for Muḥammad.[42] The Paradise story, with the story of Adam and the Archon, serves as the model *par excellence* for an actual historical situation between the posterity of Adam, who are here the Christians, and the followers of the Archon or of the Apostle of the Archon, that is, the Muslims. As Christ declares: 'Every one of them has a mansion prepared for him, because he has kept my commandments and has not imitated Adam and the *Archon* in their revolt against me, but had confessed my grace.'[43]

Although Muslims are not mentioned explicitly in this text, it is obvious that a certain familiarity with Islamic theological arguments dictated a re-consideration of Christian biblical traditions and Christian theology. It is characteristic of the beginnings and development of Christian-Muslim theological dialogue that the subjects broadly addressed here, include the understanding of the Trinity, the stressing of the spiritual character of Paradise versus the more 'materialistic' Islamic view of Paradise and, finally, a common story for Christian and Islamic lore, the Paradise story itself. If we assume that this text was indeed written by Christians who were exposed to Islamic beliefs and even Islamic religious propaganda, the selection of themes appears to be deliberate for the re-enforcement of Christian identity and separateness.

Consequently, believers can confront Muslims with the correct

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[39] Ibid., p. 150.
[40] Ibid., p. 151, n. 1.
[41] Ibid., p. 147.
[42] Cf. Ibid., p. 147, n. 5.
[43] Ibid., p. 141

exposition of Trinitarian theology in hope of the spiritual rewards in heaven, and they can also claim the correct version of the Paradise story, which bears evidence for the true faith. The refutation of qur'anic teachings that may have sounded close to Christian beliefs (such as the figure of Jesus), or that may have been appealing to the Christians (such as the descriptions of Paradise) is at the same time an exhortation to perseverance in the right faith for Christians confronted with the option of conversion. Although this text does not contain any concrete information about defection to Islam or about hardships that might have led to conversions, some passages sound like an effort to bring comfort and reassurance to Christians under persecution. The *Apocalypse of Peter I* addresses those faithful, 'who have borne patiently the injuries inflicted on them by the children of the tares' and 'who have suffered persecution for my [Christ's] sake and stood firm against the injustices of the children of the tares.'[44]

In addition to the instructions about everyday piety, there are also certain admonitions to charity and good moral behaviour, which assure rewards for the faithful Christians who have endured much already in this life. As Christ promises:

> If you do the things that I have ordered you to do I will prolong your lives, multiply your provisions, double your wealth, remove your troubles, guard your souls from all the evil which had prevailed upon you, enhance your prestige in the world, stand by you, care well for you as long as you live, lengthen the fixed time of your death and fulfil the desires of your hearts in respect of your daughters and your sons; and every good deed which you will perform I will increase it and double it several times for you, and cause it to possess higher value.'[45]

Conclusion

Pseudepigraphical literature in Arabic contributed to the preservation and transmission of knowledge of the Bible long before all the biblical texts themselves were available in Arabic. Biblical stories could have become easily accessible in this way, possibly also through an oral form of communication. The production of this literature

[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid., p. 119.

made it possible for Christians under Islamic rule to maintain a continuous, lively and productive relationship with their scripture and even to re-construct their own Christian identity through a new literary language.

The re-writing of the main stories of the Bible, especially the re-writing of the first chapters of Genesis explaining the creation and nature of the world and of humanity, the story of transgression and the origin of sin, and finally the present state of humanity, serve as a theological basis for the self-understanding of the community.

The encouraging and paraenetic role of apocalyptic literature in times of political-historical crisis is further expressed through its fundamental theological scheme, which unifies the beginning of the creation with its end. The biblical history corresponds to the history of the world, which is pre-determined by God in the very moments of the creation. The pre-determination of world history secures the outcome of historical events, which in this perspective can be only temporary and cannot change the course of the history, which is based on the history of creation.

The *Arabic Apocalypse of Peter I* offers a solid even if elementary or simplistic basic knowledge of Christian theological beliefs. It seeks to stress the omnipotence and omniscience of God, Jesus Christ, which provides the theological background for the political apocalyptic part that follows in the same text collection. The Christology in this text is only generally defined, which might indicate the intention of the author/s to present a tractate that could be representative for Christians of all denominations living under Islamic rule. In addition, the elementary theological ideas would have been understandable to all the faithful.[46] The *Arabic Apocalypse of Peter I* could have been used as a compendium, a *vade mecum* for Christian faith and conduct.

Adam's transgression story serves as an example for the faithful, for them to make the right choice of faith in Christ, as all lies in God's hand and everything is planned for Christ's coming. The promised reward in the afterlife for the believers who persevere becomes a vivid reality in the extensive and detailed colourful descriptions of Paradise and of the angelic beings that inhabit the heavenly realm.

[46] Mingana remarks: 'M. 70 contains passages which seem to possess an archaic savour and appear to precede the time of the Christological controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries' (ibid., p. 96).

The Paradise story in this monumental Arabic pseudepigraphon serves to support the preservation of the faith of Arabic-speaking Christians on the basis of the divine mysteries as these are revealed in the first chapters of the Bible.

Finally, Christ explains to Peter: 'I know that I have shown you the things that were at the very beginning and the things that will be at the very end, because all things are present in the palm of my hand, and any time I will them to be they are.'[47]

[47] Ibid., p. 152.

BIBLICAL EXEGESIS AND INTERRELIGIOUS POLEMICS IN THE ARABIC *APOCALYPSE OF PETER —THE BOOK OF THE ROLLS*

BARBARA ROGGEMA

The Arabic *Apocalypse of Peter*, or *Book of the Rolls*, is one of many texts produced by Miaphysite Christians in which they try to come to terms with the fact that they are subjected to Islamic rule. It is well-known that this has been a great challenge to all Christian communities in the Near East since the earliest time of Muslim domination. Does God not grant worldly power to the kingdom truly professing his name? The belief in divine support for the orthodox sovereigns of this world formed the basis of Byzantine imperial propaganda and was exploited during the wars against the Sasanians, who were believed to have been overcome by the power of the holy cross. This is how matters stood on the eve of the Muslim conquests. However, once the caliphs settled in Syria they sent the same message, saying that their might was God-given and turning qur'anic allusions to future victories for Islam into a core element of early Muslim propaganda.

It has been suggested that for Miaphysite Christians the apparent defeat of the invincible cross was a less crucial question than it was for Chalcedonians, because the Miaphysites were already subjected to people of a different confession. They viewed the Byzantines as heretics, who could not have triumphed in the name of God, and they would even have seen the Muslim conquests as a liberation from Byzantine rule, as a 'delivery from the cruelty of the Romans'.[1] All in all, however, this type of response is rare in Miaphysite writings; it is evident from the sources that Miaphysites were in fact very much troubled by the questions of why God allowed non-Christians to succeed in occupying their land, why God seemed to have chosen the

[1] The words of Dionysius of Tell-Maḥre (d. 845) in Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche jacobite d'Antioche (1166-99)*, 4 vols, Paris, 1899-1910, vol. IV, p. 410 (Syr), vol. II, pp. 412-13 (trans).

side of the Prophet and to have abandoned their community.[2]

The answers to such questions were often formulated in texts belonging to the genre of the 'historical apocalypse'. This genre, age-old and thoroughly familiar in the Christian world through the various apocalyptic books of the Bible, is a powerful medium to secure the centrality and stability of the community's outlook on the world during a time of crisis. It puts change and adversity into a larger historical perspective and reveals that the challenge to one's world view has a well-defined purpose in the divine plan. By revealing the ultimate vindication of the community's ideology, the historical apocalypse seeks to convince its audience of the need to persevere in trusting in God's support for its cause.

When looking at the Christian apocalypses of early Islam, we see how the appearance of this new and rival religion was placed in such a meta-historical apocalyptic framework to show that Islam had come as a temporary tool of God's wrath. A strategic aspect of these texts was to depict Muslims as lacking a religious message: they are presented as a mere barbarians, whose invasion was orchestrated by God in his concern with the fate of Christianity. They are puppets in God's hand and have no message or motivation of their own. In most of these texts they are also thoroughly evil, so as to underline the negative role allotted to them by God.[3]

It is quite possible that during the first half century of Muslim domination Christians depicted their new rulers as an invading kingdom whose downfall was imminent, because they had not yet been able to recognize Islam as a rival faith.[4] However, they continued to portray Islam in these terms for a long time because it was a way to evade the religious challenge it posed. In the second/eighth century we see carefully constructed apologetic treatises appear, which, it has been argued, show that under the pressure of real life, Christians

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[2] See J. Moorhead, 'Monophysite response to the Arab invasions', *Byzantion* 51, 1981, pp. 577-91, for a dismantling of the myth of a Miaphysite 'welcome' of Muslim rule.

[3] An overview of the surviving texts can be found in R.G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (*Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* 13), Princeton NJ, 1997, pp. 259-309.

[4] S.P. Brock, 'Syriac views of emergent Islam', in G.H.A. Juynboll, ed., *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society*, Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1982, [pp. 9-21] p. 13 (repr. Brock, *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (*Variorum Collected Studies* 199) , London, 1984).

could no longer evade the religious claims of Islam.[5] The attraction of the apocalyptic mode of thinking nevertheless remained, and many centuries later one still finds apocalyptic texts depicting Muslims as aliens temporarily passing through the Holy Land.[6]

The Arabic Apocalypse of Peter—Book of the Rolls

The Arabic *Apocalypse of Peter* or *Book of the Rolls* is an intriguing example of a text that holds on to the apocalyptic paradigm, but at the same time makes some room for a discussion of Islam as a religion. In this chapter I should like to introduce readers to this fascinating text, which, despite Alphonse Mingana's captivating research, is a nearly forgotten witness to the experience of Christians living in the medieval Middle East. The central question that I want to address is how the author (or authors) tries to convince his audience that an unwavering faith in Christ is reconcilable with the challenge of a Muslim-dominated world. I will try to unravel the text's methods and arguments in support of this notion by means of several questions. What are the ways in which the text tries to show that Islam has a temporary role in the divine plan? How does it use the Bible for this purpose? And how does the text ultimately manage to maintain the image of Muslims as outsiders in a Christian world? Before these questions can be discussed in detail, I will first need to give a concise overview of what is known about this text.

At various points in the text references to its own title appear, and as it turns out there are more than one. The titles *Apocalypse of Peter* and *Book of the Rolls* have been used in modern scholarship, but there are at least four other names found in the manuscripts.[7] For the sake of brevity and clarity I will hereafter refer to the work as the *APBR*. Graf rightly took issue with calling the text simply the *Apocalypse of Peter*, because of a possible confusion with the ancient *Apocalypse of Peter* that is known to have existed already in the second

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[5] G.J. Reinink, 'The beginnings of Syriac apologetic literature in response to Islam', *Oriens Christianus* 77, 1993, pp. 165-87.

[6] See for example two late eighteenth-century texts belonging to this tradition in D. Cook, 'Two Christian Arabic prophecies of liberation from Muslim rule from the late 18th century', *Oriens Christianus* 84, 2000, pp. 66-76.

[7] Graf, *GCAL*, vol. I, p. 285.

century CE and had borderline canonical status.[8] The popularity of this last text, which only survives in its entirety in Ethiopic and in a number of Greek fragments, is undoubtedly the reason why, during Islamic times, the same title and setting were chosen for an apocalypse that pictured the future of the Christian communities under Muslim rule. It has to be noted, however, that the *APBR* is not a reworking of the ancient *Apocalypse of Peter*. The fact that its Ethiopic version reflects an Arabic *Vorlage* has made scholars look for witnesses of that stage of transmission of the text, but as yet without success. A close verbal correspondence between the ancient *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *APBR* is absent; there is a minor overlap in eschatological motifs, but most of these are common in Christian apocalypses, and the most noteworthy elements of the ancient *Apocalypse of Peter* are not present in the *APBR*.[9]

The *APBR* is a long text that covers somewhere between one hundred and two hundred folios in most manuscripts. Bradtke and Graf have made provisional inventories of these manuscripts.[10] As they have not distinguished the *APBR* from other pieces of Arabic Petrine literature it is difficult to say how many manuscripts there are, but on the basis of their descriptions I conclude that there are at least twenty-three, not counting short fragments.[11]

As for its contents, many different Christian texts and themes find a place under the umbrella of Christ revealing heavenly secrets to Peter on the Mount of Olives, and Peter in turn entrusting them to Clement. The text includes, among others, slightly adapted versions

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[8] References to and quotations from the ancient *Apocalypse of Peter* in early Christian literature can be found in D.D. Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened: A Study of the Greek (Ethiopic) Apocalypse of Peter* (*SBL Diss. Series* 97), Atlanta GA, 1988, pp. 20-79; this work also contains an edition and translation.

[9] See the list of common elements in Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, pp. 10-12. The hypothesis that the *APBR* may still hide some parts of the ancient Apocalypse in the sections left out by Mingana was brushed aside by several scholars and can certainly be dismissed after my inspection of MS Par. Ar. 76 (see description below). However, not all manuscripts of *other* Christian Arabic Petrine texts have been explored.

[10] Graf, *GCAL*, vol. I, pp. 289-92; E. Bradtke, 'Handschriftliche Überlieferung und Bruchstücke der arabisch-aethiopischen Petrus-Apokalypse', *Zeitschrift für Wissenschaftliche Theologie* 36, 1893, [pp. 455-93] pp. 457-76.

[11] MSS Mingana Syr. 70, 138, 441, 555, Sinai Ar. 508, Vat. Syr. 159, Vat. Ar. 165, Par. Ar. 76, 77, 78, 79, 5015, Par. Syr. 63, 232, Berl. Syr. 243, Cairo 19, 322, 352, 518, Cambr. Add. 306, Bodl. Ar. Chr. Uri 99, Bodl. Ar. Nicoll 48, Harvard Syr. 86. None of the manuscripts are in Syriac; 'Syr' is used in all these cases to refer to Karshuni manuscripts.

of the *Cave of Treasures* and the *Testament of Adam*,[12] prophecies about the early Christian kings, a list of seventy heresies, Christ's prophecies about the appearance of Islam, its rulers and its downfall, detailed descriptions of heaven and hell, a long discourse on the Antichrist, an explanation of the cardinal sins, and a revelation about the abrogation of the Mosaic Law. Toward the end of the text there is a long account of Clement's encounter with Peter and the adventures of Peter in Rome, which bears some resemblance to the pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* and *Homilies* and is perhaps based on an ancient Syriac life of Clement.[13]

The text has not been edited or translated in its entirety.[14] Margaret Dunlop Gibson published an edition of what is, in all likelihood, a truncated version of the text found in a third/ninth- or fourth/tenth-century Sinai manuscript.[15] Mingana then published a facsimile edition and translation of large sections of the text as found in one of his Karshuni manuscripts, from the end of Gibson's text onwards.[16] Although Mingana gives summaries of the parts which he has left out, it would obviously be desirable to see these published as well. However, because the text of Mingana's manuscript has suffered enormously from its transition into Karshuni, as well as

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[12] The text begins with these two works. For a discussion of this section see Emmanouela Grypeou's contribution to this volume.

[13] A. Mingana, 'The Apocalypse of Peter', in *Woodbrooke Studies*, vol. III, Cambridge, 1927-34, [pp. 93-449] pp. 351-2.

[14] The Ethiopic reworking of the *ABPR* has had a better fate and is now completely available in translation, due to Bausi's complement to the work begun by Grébaut; A. Bausi, *Qalēmenṭos: il Qalēmenṭos Etiopico: La rivelazione di Pietro a Clemente, I libri 3-7, traduzione e introduzione* (*Istituto Universitario Orientale. Dipartimento di Studi e Ricerche su Africa e Paesi Arabi. Studi Africanistici, Serie Etiopica* 2), Naples, 1992. See pp. 7-8, 13-17 for Grébaut's publications. I would like to thank Prof. Bausi for his kindness in sending me his work.

[15] M.D. Gibson, 'Kitāb al-Magāll or the Book of the Rolls', in *Apocrypha Arabica* (*Studia Sinaitica* 8), London, 1901 based on MS Sin. Ar. 508 (reprinted with a study of the reception of *The Cave of Treasures* in Arab Christianity, in A. Battista and B. Bagatti, *La Caverna dei Tesori. Testo arabo con traduzione italiano e commento* (*Studium Biblicum Franciscanum. Collectio Minor* 26), Jerusalem, 1979). The ground on which Graf, *GCAL*, vol. I, pp. 283-4, convincingly argued that this is a truncated text is the fact that the opening words of the work refer to its contents, but the promised sections on the end of times are not to be found in the text of this manuscript. They are, however, present in other manuscripts.

[16] Mingana, 'The Apocalypse of Peter'. The manuscript used is MS Mingana Syr. 70 (not MS Mingana Syr. 441, as Graf states in *GCAL*, vol. I, p. 290); only 82 of the 194 folios are presented in the facsimile edition.

from being unpunctuated in an earlier phase of transmission, I have decided to focus on an older and clearer manuscript: MS Par. Ar. 76. This manuscript is unedited, apart from a few small sections.[17] It consists of 133 folios and was copied in 1337. It mentions two undated *Vorlagen* from Aleppo, compiled from three manuscripts, of which the oldest was from 1177.[18] The order of the various sections of the text is somewhat divergent in MS Mingana Syr. 70 and MS Par. Ar. 76, but the two manuscripts represent more or less the same content.[19] The important variations are in the wording, which is almost always better in MS Par. Ar. 76.[20]

Another difference concerns the respective provenances of the manuscripts. Whereas Mingana's Karshuni manuscript has obviously been produced in a Syrian Christian context, the Paris manuscript stems from a Coptic environment, as we can see from the colophon

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[17] For the Testament of Adam on ff. 8b-10b, see C. Bezold, 'Das arabisch-äthiopische Testamentum Adami', in C. Bezold, ed., *Orientalische Studien Theodor Nöldeke zum siebzigsten Geburtstag (2. März 1906) gewidmet*, 2 vols, Gieszen, 1906, vol. II, pp. 893-912. Two minor fragments (ff. 2b-3b and 111b-114b) appear in P.A. de Lagarde, *Mittheilungen*, 4 vols., Göttingen, 1884-91, vol. IV, pp. 6-16.

[18] Described in G. Troupeau, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes. 1re partie: manuscrits chrétiens*, 2 vols, Paris, 1972-4, vol. I, pp. 58-9. These dates are given according the years of the martyrs, which was common among Copts only.

[19] Noteworthy differences are the following: MS Mingana Syr. 70 contains a second version of the *Testament of Adam*, which MS Par. Ar. 76 does not, and which appears to be an interruption of the description of heaven and the angels (Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', pp 110-19; cf. the uninterrupted narrative in MS Par. Ar. f. 43a). MS Par. Ar. 76 includes a list of heresies on ff. 51b-53a, followed by a prophecy about emperors from the time of Christ until Islam on ff. 53a-54a (absent in Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', cf. p. 141). This list continues with the predictions concerning the appearance of Islam and its rulers and a description of the Second Coming of Christ, which ends on f. 86b. This section is also to be found in Mingana Syr. 70, but further towards the end of the MS and without the text of ff. 82a-86b. Then follows a long description of heaven and hell (ff. 86b-95b), which is to be found earlier on in Mingana Syr. 70 (Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', pp. 142-52), with the difference that MS Par. Ar. 76 includes a list of prophetic verses from the Bible on ff. 92a-94a. The section f. 96a-109b is a continuation of Christ's exhortations to Peter, and is presumably one of the sections which Mingana has omitted (Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', p. 355). From f. 109b onwards the text agrees again with Mingana (cf. trans. p. 361), both recounting pseudo-Clementine adventures, except that MS Par. Ar. 76 does not have the (interpolated?) subsection called 'the story of Paul' (Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', pp. 379-82).

[20] The translated passages in this article are therefore all taken from MS Par. Ar. 76; I have nevertheless added the page numbers of Mingana's translation for comparison.

as well as the content.[21] This brings me to the question of its milieu of origin. On the basis of a perceived emphasis on the fate of Egypt during Islamic rule, the text has been regarded as an Egyptian composition by several scholars. In addition, Mingana found the text to be unlike anything he knew from the Syriac tradition and therefore assumed that the Syriacisms in the text were the result of a later phase in the transmission.[22] What Mingana did not know is that the Copto-Arabic manuscript from Paris contains a number of words that hint at Syria and Syriac as well, such as the use of *garbā* and *tayman* for North and South and the names of the months according to the Syrian calendar. In a Coptic-Arabic manuscript the presence of such elements is clearly more difficult to explain, if one holds on to the supposition of an Egyptian origin.[23] In this respect it is also worth noting that the Paris manuscript states in its colophon that it has been copied from Aleppan manuscripts. Furthermore, at least two of the texts that have been integrated into the work, the *Cave of Treasures* and the *Testament of Adam*, belong to the Syriac tradition. The emphasis on the fate of Egypt is definitely strong in a few passages, but in others the focus is incontestably on Syria and Mesopotamia. On these grounds the scholarly consensus needs to be challenged and the possibility that the transmission occurred in the opposite direction deserves to be investigated more seriously in future research. This issue should, however, not make us lose sight of the fact that the text became popular in both Miaphysite communities. It is not always possible to determine whether the text reflects the shared experiences of Copts and Syrians living under Islam or whether certain ideas expressed are the unique views of one or the other of these two communities.

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[21] See n. 19 above and the discussion on the Prophet as 'the Beast' below.

[22] Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', pp. 214-15. His comment that 'all these apocryphal documents have nothing in common with the doctrines of the Syrian Church be they of the Nestorian, or the Monophysite, or the Melchite school of thought' comes as a surprise, considering the fact that he often points out the *APBR*'s indebtedness to Syriac writings. He must also have noticed that the text is not particularly concerned with doctrine to begin with.

[23] Apparently the Syrian names of the month seemed so foreign that the Egyptian copyist of MS Bod. Ar. Nicoll 48 decided to put a gloss concerning the month April: *faḍā'il shahr nīsān wa-huwa barmūdah*: 'the virtues of the month Nisan, that is: Baramudah'; see A. Nicoll, *Bibliothecae Bodleianae codicum manuscriptorum orientalium catalogus, pars secunda*, Oxford, 1835, pp. 52-3.

The rise and fall of the Muslim kings

The parts of the text which deal directly with Islam, i.e. the long apocalyptic sections predicting the vicissitudes of Islamic rule, are to be found in the middle of the *APBR* and make up about one third of the text in MS Par. Ar. 76. In order to discuss the *APBR* as a later witness to the apocalyptic tradition, I must first show that it postdates the early second/eighth century. This is relatively easy, since there are numerous references to the Abbasid period in the text. The only easily recognizable caliphs whose rule is predicted are the Umayyads: the first letters of their names are given and one can identify the sequence of caliphs from al-Walīd in 705 to Marwān II and the Abbasid revolution.[24] What follows then is another long list of caliphs, again with their initials, but here the historical identifications are less straightforward and we have to wonder whether the text is corrupt or whether the identities of the leaders have been deliberately distorted in order to enhance the mysteriousness of the prophecy. An additional possibility is that the list reflects a genuine second/eighth-century attempt at prophecy, but this can be excluded, because we do find references to later historical events.[25] One Abbasid caliph, for example, is said to impose a dress code on the Christians, to treat them harshly and damage their churches.[26] This seems to allude to the regime of al-Mutawakkil (r. 847-861). His name is said to start with the letter *j̄īm* and indeed his name was Jaʿfar. What supports this identification is the fact that it fits with the prediction that this caliph's fourth successor would lose the territory of Egypt.[27] This coincides with the break-away regime of the Ṭulūnids in the second half of the third/ninth century, that began during the caliphate of al-Muhtadī (r. 869-870).

These prophecies may serve as proof of the relative lateness of the text.[28] Soon after this particular caliph the prophecy of forty kings

[24] MS Par. Ar. 76, ff. 72b-73b (cf. Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', pp. 262-4).

[25] This is not to say that the text cannot contain original second/eighth-century material—something which has been suggested on the basis of the predictions that appear to reflect the period of the Abbasid revolution. Some of the apocalyptic material is similar to that in third/ninth-century Muslim apocalyptic sources.

[26] MS Par. Ar. 76, ff. 75a-75b (cf. Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', pp. 267-8).

[27] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 76a (cf. Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', pp. 268-9).

[28] At this stage I will not venture to posit a more definite date. Although the text is believed to have come to the attention of crusaders during the Fifth Crusade (see

of the Arabs will have been fulfilled. We should note, however, that this fulfilment of forty kings is not coupled with one specific decisive victory of a Christian king, whether it be the true Last Emperor or simply a Byzantine emperor rising up against his eastern enemies. So how and when should the Christian audience of this apocalypse expect their liberation from the hands of the Muslims? The answers to this question are multiple, not to say contradictory. Throughout the text, different ideas about it are expressed: when the king of the East and the king of the West engage in battle, when the north is in ruin, when twelve kings and nine little kings have completed their rule, when the Jews learn the art of warfare, when the third of April falls on a Sunday, and so on and so forth. The fact that Christ's discourse is interspersed with exclamations to Peter and more general foretelling of affliction and salvation means that no clear chronological line is distinguishable. It is rather as if many existing apocalyptic cycles—overlapping and conflicting—have been strung together. The expected time of deliverance is also left open with regard to the question of how a Christian king will eventually arrive at his victory: he is described, for example, as uniting with the kings of Rome, India and China in order to crush the Arabs, as rising from the dead, as appearing when one of the Muslim kings converts to Christianity, or simply as coming 'out of his place' and repairing to the Holy Land.

Amidst all these proceedings, what the text projects most clearly is the image of Islamic rule falling apart; the redactor of the work has found it more compelling to picture the end of Islam in multiple vivid scenarios that can never be all meaningful and plausible at the same historical point in time, than painting one scenario of Islam's imminent downfall that could soon prove wrong. The reader is urged to accept that Islamic rule will collapse, and the frequency with which that collapse passes before one's eyes is meant to enhance the persuasiveness of the prophecy, rather than to undermine it. In many instances the *APBR* also points at cracks in the power structure of the caliphate, drawing attention to internal strife and the quick

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C. Conti Rossini, 'Il libro dello Pseudo-Clemente e la crociata di Damietta', *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 9, 1921, pp. 32-5), this does not mean that it was redacted during that era. MS Par. Ar. 76's mention of a *Vorlage* from the year 1177 also suggests that the Apocalypse predated the Fifth Crusade, although it is not known whether the text underwent alterations after 1177. See also below n. 56.

succession of rulers, in order to intimate a lack of divine support for their sovereignty:

> Most of the kings of this people will pass away through disasters and murder. The lives of all of them will be short and inconsiderable, their lifetimes passing like a dream, for the sake of my beloved ones. I will shorten their days and make them perish quickly and fold them up like a scroll and make them vanish like smoke, as if they had never existed. Most of these things I do are for your sheep, O Peter.[29]

Islam in the Bible

Another means through which the apocalypse tries to show that Islamic rule is a not more than a phase in human history is biblical exegesis. Numerous quotations and allusions to the Bible serve to prove, on the one hand, that the advent of Islam was not lacking in God's prescience, and, on the other, that it is limited in time and purpose. Sometimes biblical verses are woven into Christ's discourse in order to tie them, implicitly, to the question of Islam's power over the Christian communities. A verse from the Gospel of John (16.2) features in the text, for example, in order to make it both a prediction and a refutation of *jihād* propaganda:

> The followers of that man (i.e. Muḥammad) will spare no pains to harm my people and *when one of them kills a man who is a believer in me, he will think that by doing so he presents an offering to God*. And they will say that both the killer and the victim will go to paradise and infinite felicity.[30]

Matthew 24 and the Book of Revelation are among the frequently quoted parts of the New Testament. Following the example of many

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[29] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 73b (cf. Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', p. 264). This was perhaps an argument against Muslim propaganda of some currency. In a third/ninth-century Christian-Muslim debate, the Christian interlocutor asks, in response to the argument that God protects Muslims and makes Islam victorious, why the caliph cannot even feel safe in his own household: 'Your rule is less than two hundred years old, but you have already killed seven caliphs, none of whom were enemies or opponents of Islam' (G.B. Marcuzzo, *Le dialogue d'Abraham de Tibériade avec 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Hāšimī à Jerusalem vers 820. Étude, édition critique et traduction annotée d'un texte théologique chrétien de la littérature arabe* (*Textes et Études sur l'Orient Chrétien* 3), Rome, 1986, pp. 328-9.

[30] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 69a. (cf. Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', pp. 253-4). In John 16.2 the subject of the sentence in italics is plural.

earlier apocalypses about Islamic rule, the *APBR* also turns to the Old Testament to show that the rise of Islam was foretold. In several passages the Muslims are associated with the progeny of Ishmael. 'Sons of Ishmael' is probably the biblical term most frequently used in Eastern Christian texts to refer to Muslims. Islamic rule was considered a fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham that he would make Ishmael a great nation and a progenitor of twelve princes (Gen 17.20). And because Ishmael is called a 'wild ass' (Gen 16.12), this particular term is used to refer to the Prophet. Muslims, likewise, are frequently called *ḥamīr al-waḥsh* in the *APBR*.

There are many more biblical verses referring to outsiders in the Holy Land, which are taken as foreshadowing Islam. Muslims also appear in the text as the 'People of the South' (*ahl al-tayman*). In this case, the Book of Daniel is the source of inspiration, notably the prophecies in Chapter 11 which mention the appearance of a mighty 'king of the South'. We are dealing here with a name that became quite common among Arabic- and Syriac-speaking Christians as a way to refer to Muslims. It is also found in other, non-apocalyptic texts. Although the direction of prayer of the Muslims could well have been an additional reason for the popularity of this name, there is little doubt that there is a biblical-apocalyptic flavour to the term.[31] Muslim apologists, it should be noted, also turned to these biblical passages in order to show that Islam was announced by God.

The *APBR* uses even more frequently the name 'Sons of Kedar'. Since Kedar was one of the sons of Ishmael (Gen 25.13; 1 Chronicles 1.29), and also because Muslims themselves believed that biblical references to Kedar referred to their nation, Isaiah's prophecy that 'all the glory of Kedar will come to an end' (Is. 21.16) is used in several Eastern Christian texts to prove that Muslim rule was to end at a determined point in time. In the *APBR* Christ is being staged as providing the relevant exegesis. The time-span given in the Bible until the end of the glory of Kedar is 'a year, according to the years of a hireling' (Is. 21.16). The interpretation of this verse as a reference to the collapse of Muslim rule was so well known that the apocalyptist could simply refer to 'the hireling' (*al-ajīr*), without

[31] See B. Holmberg, 'Ahl/farīq at-tayman—ein rätselvolles Epitheton', *Oriens Christianus* 78, 1994, pp. 86-103 for a detailed discussion.

a further mention of Kedar, when alluding to the caliphate. In its reinterpretation of Daniel's prophecy of the four world empires, the *APBR* hints at the length of the reigns of the kings of Babel, Greece, Rome, and the Abbasids ('the Sons of ʿAbūs', i.e. the 'lion' or the 'stern-faced'). The latter are being allotted 'the year of the hireling'.[32] Even though this particular hireling appeared to be doing overtime, Christ, in his revelations to Peter, is certifying that Kedar's days are numbered.[33]

Muslims as impure devil worshippers

Going hand in hand with the notion of Islam's temporality is the text's attempt to construct clear boundaries between the Christian and Muslim communities in order to safeguard the sense of absolute 'otherness' of Muslims. The ways in which this is achieved are hardly subtle or sophisticated. Throughout the text the Muslims are demonized and vilified. One can find them, for example, as 'the children of the tares, who are the Sons of the South and the followers of the apostle of the Archon',[34] or, in one particular passage, as 'the untamed beasts of the desert and the wasteland, whose manners are like that of irrational wild asses with a faith of filthy menstrual blood', 'sons of impure muddled water, who tear flesh to pieces, lovers of spilling blood', 'the *umma* that washes its face with urine, whose ornament is its toothpicks', 'worshippers of the devil', 'roaring like camels and prostrating in the houses of idols, coming from the loins of Sodom and the progeny of Gomorrah'.[35] Yet another accusation in the same passage is that they are 'commanding evil and forbidding good'. This is an inversion of the qur'anic injunction 'to command good and forbid evil'. The *APBR*

[32] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 58b (cf. Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', p. 233).

[33] See Harald Suermann's contribution to this volume for a more detailed discussion of biblical passages that are taken as typological references to Islam in early Christian apocalypses.

[34] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 95b (cf. Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', pp. 150-1). 'Archon' features in John 14.30 and is generally understood by Christian exegetes as the Devil. Interestingly, several Muslim commentators saw it as a foreshadowing of Muḥammad in the Bible.

[35] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 54a-54b (cf. Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', p. 220).

uses the term for its polemical purposes several times.[36] One of the characteristics of the Antichrist is said to be that he will pretend to be 'commanding good and forbidding evil' and Muslims will be among the first to follow him.[37] This we may truly call the acme of anti-Muslim polemic: not only is Muḥammad like the Antichrist, the Antichrist is also like Muḥammad. Other polemical labels of the Prophet, who never appears under his real name, are 'destroyer of himself and his followers, disciple of the Son of Perdition, womanizer, liar, briber'.[38]

In the part of the text that paraphrases large sections of the Book of Revelation, it is asserted that 'the Beast', whose number is 666 (Rev 13.18), refers to Muḥammad. It is spelled out how 'Mametios' in Coptic and 'Sarapidos' in Greek both add up to this number.[39] In several Coptic apocalypses the same 'calculation' is made.[40] At times it is said to refer to the Prophet Muḥammad and in other instances to an oppressive Caliph with the same name. This interpretation of the number of 'the Beast' of the Book of Revelation became so well-rooted in Coptic tradition that Paul al-Būshī (d. after 1240) referred to it in his commentary on that part of the Bible.[41] According to his contemporary, the exegete Ibn Kātib Qayṣar, Paul al-Būshī claimed to have found this identification among a total of five Greek names adding up to this number at the Lighthouse of Alexandria.[42] This instance of gematria appears to be uniquely Coptic and indeed is not to be found in Mingana's Karshuni manuscript.

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[36] The appropriation and distortion of Islamic religious terms is a noteworthy aspect of the *APBR*. Muslims are 'hypocrites' (*munāfiqūn*) and abolish Christ's 'Sunna', Christ calls for 'Jihād in his name' etc.

[37] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 85b (not in Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter').

[38] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 67b (cf. Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', p. 251).

[39] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 87b (not in Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter').

[40] For example A. Périer, 'Lettre de Pisuntios, évèque de Qeft, à ses fidèles', *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 19, 1914, pp. 79-92, [pp. 302-23] pp. 306, 318, and J. Ziadeh, 'L'apocalypse de Samuel, supérieur de Deir-el-Qalamoun', *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 20, 1915-17, [pp. 374-92] p. 389. See J.M.J.M. van Lent, 'The nineteen Muslim kings in Coptic apocalypses', *Parole de l'Orient* 25, 2000, [pp. 643-93] pp. 656-68, for a discussion of the theme and relevant literature.

[41] For the relevant passage from this unedited work, see Graf, *GCAL*, vol. II, p. 358, n. 2.

[42] Ibn Kātib Qayṣar, *Tafsīr ru'yā al-Qiddīs Yuḥannā al-Lāhūtī*, ed. A.H.S. al-Birmāwī, Cairo, 1939, pp. 223-4.

Christians as Muslims

That the absolute otherness of Muslims in the *ABPR* is a thoroughly artificial construction is obvious from the mention of several commandments of Christ concerning the interaction with Muslims. He commands the Christians, for example, not to use Muslim names and not to intermarry with them: 'Woe, O Peter, to those of the believers in me, who are called by the names of the Sons of ʿAbūs instead of the names of baptism, woe to those marrying with them.'[43] Such commandments are scattered through the text; listed together, it is as if we find Christ's version of the 'Pact of ʿUmar'. Both that pact and this Christian attempt to regulate Muslim-Christian interaction seek to preserve the believers' separate communal identities. In both cases it is self-evident that the rules were formulated when the type of assimilation that they are supposed to prevent was well under way. A most severe warning of Christ in the *APBR* concerns the practice of women dyeing their hands:

> O Peter, when you see immorality and adultery out in the open, when the unbelievers in me increase, when the women who believe in me dye their hands black with the leaves of the tree that I cursed from among all trees created in this world…woe then, woe to the women who dye themselves with it, after having received baptism, for their lot will be with those who cried out before Pilate: 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' Better that the woman who uses the dye of the leaves of this tree had not been born.[44]

With this forceful reproof of applying henna, the apocalyptist suggests that the custom is not only non-Christian, but also 'anti-Christian', as he ties it to those who wanted to see Christ killed. This is obviously quite a severe accusation, which—as it happens—is based on an incorrect assumption regarding the origin of the custom, which is not distinctly Arab or Muslim and already existed in the Middle East in the Bronze Age. Christian women in the Middle East did not pay heed to this strong warning, as the rituals of applying ornamental painting on one's hands were generally as popular in

[43] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 78b-79a (cf. Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', p. 275).

[44] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 64b (cf. Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', p. 245). I am assuming that this is a reference to henna, which can grow to the size of a small tree, but there are several other kinds of traditional ornamental dyestuffs. None of these, to my knowledge, have been 'cursed' in the Bible.

Christian communities as among Jews and Muslims.[45] The fact that the custom was part of the cultural world at large, and not exclusively Christian, is precisely the reason why the apocalyptist objects to it and maintains that it harms the faith, even though there is no reason to assume that women applied these cosmetics for religious reasons. Although we do not know whether and how they responded to this severe criticism, a curious parallel is known from Morisco women who were condemned during the Spanish Inquisition for what was considered to be a crypto-Muslim practice. They managed to defend themselves in court by saying that it had an aesthetic rather than a religious purpose, but they eventually lost their case.[46]

While the *APBR* is putting up such fences to prevent Christians from walking into Muslim territory and diluting their own traditions with those that were considered alien, it tries, at the same time, to break down some of the fences set up by the Muslim authorities. It is clear from the text that the *dhimma* regulations were felt as a real infringement on the life of the community, not just as a notional set of rules. The apocalyptist feels the need to show that Christ is not powerless vis-à-vis the restricted liberties of his followers and argues that the *dhimma* rules somehow fit in the divine plan. One argument used is that what seems to be a humiliating discriminatory rule is in reality a sign of honour. In the prognostications of the future caliphs, one of them is described as treating the Christians particularly harshly. There is little doubt that the person alluded to is the Caliph al-Mutawakkil.[47] One of the measures he will introduce is described as follows:

> He will change their apparel so that it will become like the day and he will have the illusion that he chastises them with that, not realizing that he adorns them with it and makes their religion eminent.[48]

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[45] According to Löw, in Palestine it was even considered a necessity for Christian women and girls to colour their hands before Pentecost: 'sonst sterben sie von Kummer'. See: I. Löw, 'Semitische Färberpflanzen', *Zeitschrift für Semitistik* 1, 1922, [pp. 97-162] p. 138. Lane observed the practice during Coptic weddings (E. W. Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, London, repr. 1989, p. 537).

[46] H.C. Lea, *The Moriscos of Spain: Their Conversion and Expulsion*, New York, repr. 1968, p. 62; D. Root, 'Speaking Christian: orthodoxy and difference in sixteenth century Spain', *Representations* 23, 1988, [pp. 118-34] pp. 126-7. Here also, the practice was attacked even though it was known to be a tradition among 'old Christian' (i.e. non-Morisco) women as well, and thus not exclusively 'Moorish'.

[47] This is the passage already mentioned above: MS Par. Ar. 76, ff. 75a-75b (cf. Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', pp. 267-8).

[48] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 75b (cf. Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', p. 268).

Calling this new outfit 'like the day' (*ka-al-nahār*) is undoubtedly an allusion to its brightness. The colour that al-Mutawakkil chose for his Christian subjects was yellow, or more precisely, 'honey colour'.[49] The official colour of the Abbasids' own dress, as is well known, was black, so 'like the day' is also meant as a contrast with their garments that were 'like the night'. In other words, it is being revealed that the caliph, unknowingly, lets Christ's light shine over the world.

A more frequently used response to these kinds of rules is the suggestion that towards the end of times the tables will be turned, when the 'Pact of 'Umar' will be used against the Muslims themselves. For example, the Lion's Whelp (*jarw al-asad*), who is one of the future deliverers of the Christians, will take revenge on the Muslim rulers by reversing the taxation of the *dhimmī*s and the prohibition to carry arms:

> this noble king will vanquish the treacherous Sons of the Wolf and demand taxes from them, forty times more than any sum they have taken from the believers in me […] and from that time onwards it will not be permissible for them to carry weapons ever again.[50]

Elsewhere it described how Christ, on his return to earth, will give Christians freedom of worship again and abolish the *adhān*. The 'high places of the devil from which falsehood is professed several times a day' will be destroyed and Christian prayer will be announced publicly again by means of the clapper.[51]

Muslims as Jews

For its own particular purpose, the text constructs an image of Muslims as total outsiders in a Christian world, while, again, the 'regulations' revealed by Christ to Peter show that the text comes from a community in which Muslims and Christians interacted on a daily basis. The absurdity of the constructed 'otherness' is nowhere stronger than in the assertion that Arabic is a language of

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[49] See A. Fattal, *Le Statut légal des non-musulmans en pays d'islam*, Beirut, 1958, pp. 101-2, with references to several sources on p. 101, n. 69.

[50] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 58a (cf. Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', p. 231).

[51] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 82b (not in Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter').

Barbarians. The author is consciously oblivious to the fact that he lived and wrote in an Arabic-speaking world.[52] It was a world in which Christians knew full well what the Muslim objections to their faith were, and from the mountain of Christian Arabic apologetic treatises we know that these objections were felt as real challenges. And although the fundament of the apocalypse is the construction of Islam's demonic 'otherness', in which one would not expect there to be room for questions of doctrinal difference and commonality, the text also on occasion addresses the question of what Muslims believe and how their faith differs from Christianity. However, no space is given for a search for common ground; there is no word about Muslims believing in God's Word and his Spirit, or about Muḥammad's mission as a monotheist Prophet, the qur'anic confirmation of the Virgin birth, or Christians being 'closest in friendship' to Muslims—themes found repeatedly in Christian Arabic apologetic texts. Islam appears as nothing more and nothing less than a total rejection of Christ and is therefore totally rejected itself. The Sons of Kedar will call Christ 'a created servant'[53] and 'a Nazarene slave, son of a bondmaid'.[54] Predictably, Christ foresees that 'many Jews will follow the wild Ass'.[55]

In order to underpin some of its suggestive resemblances between Muslims and Jews, the text integrates a popular piece of Christian anti-Muslim polemic that centres on the alleged roles of Sergius Baḥīrā, Kaʿb al-Aḥbār and ʿAbdallāh Ibn Salām in the genesis of Islam, whose names are alluded to by means of their initials. The Prophet is first predicted to encounter 'a straying sheep' who will teach him about the Christian faith. This teacher will then be killed by Muḥammad. Later two Jews will join in and pervert all the things that Muḥammad will have learnt before. These Jews are the ones who are responsible for the writing of the Qur'an. They are said to forge a book for him, made up of bits and pieces of other books.[56] All this is predicted by Christ.

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[52] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 67b (cf. Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', p. 251).

[53] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 96b (not in Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter').

[54] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 79b (cf. Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', p. 276).

[55] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 68a (cf. Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', p. 252).

[56] The story is alluded to in three different passages (on ff. 67a, 68a, and 69a (cf. Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', pp. 250-5)) that are somewhat contradictory. From the point of view of dating the text it is interesting to note that the idea that Muḥammad will kill his Christian teacher and forbid alcohol afterwards is not found in other texts

Nothing seems more discordant with the self-assured image of the omnipotent Christ, who reveals his intricate providential plan to his Apostle Peter, than these seemingly accidental but consequential encounters in the desert. However, by authoritatively equating Muslims with Jews, the apocalyptist attempts to prove, in yet another way, that Islam's downfall is inevitable. The destruction of the Jewish temple, which was believed to have been foretold in Matt. 24.2 and fulfilled in the year 70 CE, is exploited in the *APBR* as a foreshadowing of the future collapse of the Dome of the Rock:

> Remember, O Peter, what I told you before the day when I taught the Jews in the Temple that 'there shall not be left one stone upon another in Jerusalem that shall not be thrown down'? Know, O Peter, that I will make the House that Solomon built in my name a dwelling place for my opponents, the wild asses. And next I will make it a ruin.[57]

The destruction of the Jewish temple is invoked in order to prove the future defeat of Islam, while the association of Islam with Judaism is a simple means to counteract the sense that Muslims could have a claim to universal truth. Their beliefs, so to say, have already been 'uprooted' in the year 70 AD. In other words, the polemical view on the Muslim faith ('a kind of Judaism') is a self-fulfilling prophecy of its being a temporary phenomenon. It strengthens the text's central claim, expressed in so many different ways, that Islam has come into the world for other reasons than calling people to the true faith in God. And yet, this particular point provokes further questions. Why are Muslims given a religious identity which makes them *a priori* doomed? Why can God not guide them to the truth? These are questions of theodicy which, as such, are thrown up by almost all 'historical apocalypses' because of their typical dualistic constructions and excessive insistence on predestination. An apocalypse that puts the 'outsiders' on the centre stage of world history provokes the uncomfortable questions of their identity and fate. The *APBR*, interestingly enough, does provide a solution to this problem.

The text predicts that many Muslims will eventually convert to

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until the sixth/twelfth century. See my *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā: Eastern Christian Apocalyptic and Apologetics in Response to Islam*, PhD thesis, forthcoming.

[57] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 68b. On f. 71b the prophecy of Matt 24.2 is echoed once again in a similar passage that predicts the Lion's Whelp attack on the House of the wild desert asses (cf. Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', pp. 253, 258).

Christianity. The idea runs parallel to the belief that many or all Jews will convert to Christ at the end of times and is the product of the same reflection on divine justice vis-à-vis the 'hardened hearts'. The seed for the idea of the eschatological conversion of the Jews was sown by Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, and some of the Church Fathers, when reflecting on the tension between God's justice and the alleged continuous blindness of the Jews, elaborated on this idea.[58] Similarly, the *APBR* asserts that when the contours of right and wrong become ever more sharply visible, many Muslims will see the light:

> Know, O Peter, that for you and the other disciples and those who follow them I have prepared the Kingdom of Heaven. And know, O Peter, that many of the Sons of Kedar will believe in me and become part of your flock. They will be chaste and obedient to what pleases you and all their names are registered with me in the Church of the Virgins in the Heavenly Jerusalem.[59]

Concluding remarks

The discussion of the *APBR* in this paper has hopefully shown how apocalyptic prophecies, biblical exegesis, polemical tales and common anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim notions are all integrated in the text in order to provide the audience with an all-encompassing idea of how Islam can be explained from a Christian perspective. The text shows how Islam will come and how it will end, why it is better not to mingle with Muslims, and what happens if one does. In my analysis of the text I have tried to show how the apocalyptic approach to Islam and its polemical-theological evaluation are interwoven so as to become mutually reinforcing: the projected future downfall of Islam proves its lack of divine support, while its doctrines prove its future downfall. Although it would be worth dissecting it further, we ought to realize that the text is not a theological tract.

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[58] Rom 11.25-6; for a recent study of its exegesis, see J. Cohen, 'The mystery of Israel's salvation: Romans 11.25-6 in patristic and medieval exegesis', *Harvard Theological Review* 98, 2005, pp. 247-81.

[59] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 80a. In the same line of thinking it is claimed that one of the future caliphs will convert to Christianity (f. 80b), while another one will be a Christian secretly (f. 75a) (cf. Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter', pp. 267, 278-9).

The text presents Christ's unmediated voice telling his followers how things *are*. Whereas the modern reader will try to understand the coherence of its seemingly diffuse ideas, its medieval audience may well have been dissuaded from investigating this dramatic message further. Living in a community under threat of disunity and disintegration, those who heard the message will more likely have been left quivering at the thought of being 'hanged from their tongue in an unquenchable fire' as a punishment for apostasy than thinking about the thoughts and fate of that 'other community'.[60]

[60] MS Par. Ar. 76, f. 102b for this and other punishments for apostasy (not in Mingana, 'Apocalypse of Peter').

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TESTIMONY COLLECTIONS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS WITH ISLAM

DAVID BERTAINA

Introduction

The apologetic imperative within the Christian tradition has its roots in biblical literature, which is illustrated by the response of the Fathers of the Church to the command found in 1 Peter 3.15: 'Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.' The list of Patristic authors who employed scriptural testimonies in support of Christian teachings includes such well-known figures as Justin Martyr (c. 100-65), Irenaeus (c.125-c. 202), Tertullian (c. 160-c. 230), Lactantius (c. 250-c. 325), and the Syriac writer Aphrahat (mid-fourth century) in his *Demonstrations*.[1] Patristic authors also composed books of scripture arranged by topic, the most notable including a Greek collection from Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa (fourth century) and a Latin collection from Cyprian (c. 200-58), who composed a comprehensive anthology of more than seven hundred scriptural quotations.[2] Later authors would label these texts *Testimonies against the Jews*,[3] because

[1] For Justin Martyr, cf. P. Bobichon, *Justin Martyr, Dialogue avec Tryphon: édition critique*, Fribourg, 2003; C. Munier, ed., *Apologie pour les chrétiens: Saint Justin*, Fribourg, 1995; M. Marcovich, ed., *Iustini Martyris Apologiae pro Christianis* (*Patristische Texte und Studien* 38), Berlin, 1994. For Irenaeus cf. *Contre les hérésies: Irénée de Lyon* (*Sources Chrétiennes* 152-3), Paris, 1965-82, pp. 210-11, 263-4, 293-4; A. Rousseau, ed., *Démonstration de la prédication apostolique* (*Sources Chrétiennes* 406), Paris, 1995. For Tertullian, cf. H. Tränkle, ed., Q.S.F. Tertulliani, *Adversus Iudaeos: Mit Einleitung und kritischen Kommentar*, Wiesbaden, 1964. For Lactantius, cf. P. Monat, ed., *Lactance: Institutions Divines, Livre IV* (*Sources Chrétiennes* 377), Paris, 1992. For Aphrahat, cf. J.-M. Pierre, ed., *Aphraate le Sage Persan: Les Exposés* (*Sources Chrétiennes* 349, 359), Paris, 1988.

[2] For Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa, cf. M.C. Albl ed., *Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa: Testimonies against the Jews*, Atlanta GA, 2004. For Cyprian, cf. G. Hartel, ed., *Testimoniorum Libri Tres ad Quirinum* (*CSEL* III.1), Vienna, 1868.

[3] These testimonies left an enduring legacy of anti-Jewish polemic in Syriac and Arabic compositions. Corresponding with the rise of Islamic power in the Middle East, the altered status of Jewish communities permitted Jewish apologists to contest

their primary function was for apologetics and polemics with their biblical interlocutors. By arguing from these collections of scripture, these writers utilized testimonies to commend Christian faith and praxis.

At this point, it is important to note the characteristics of testimony collections. A testimony collection contains biblical verses arranged by topic with minimal editorial comment, such as in the works of Pseudo-Gregory and Cyprian. Their purpose is to prove forensically a theological position. These collections occasionally occur in Christian Arabic literature,[4] although writers would also extract blocks of proof-texts that correspond with an argument for a particular situation. These texts would have been useful in liturgical, catechetical, missionary and dialogue settings. According to the so-called *testimonia* hypothesis presented by several scholars,[5] Christian authors utilized their own local testimony or extract collections rather than an entire Bible when composing their works. Through source critical analysis, these scholars attempt to recreate

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Christian practices, cf. S. Stroumsa, 'Jewish polemics against Islam and Christianity in the light of Judaeo-Arabic texts', in R. Hoyland, ed., *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, Burlington VT, 2004, pp. 201-10. In response to this shift, Christians continued to utilize older anti-Jewish *testimonia* to support Christian faith and praxis. One example is a Syriac text in the form of a dialogue that utilizes a testimony collection for anti-Jewish polemic. This eighth-century work, entitled *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew*, contains copious evidence pointing towards the use of *testimonia* in its composition, according to its editor A. P. Hayman (*The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew* (*CSCO* 338-9), Louvain, 1973, pp. 9-32). He points out its affinities with a sixth/twelfth-century Syriac version of the *Discussion of St Silvester with the Jews* based on their utilization of identical form and content of scripture in several places. For an extensive analysis of anti-Jewish polemic in Christian writers of the Abbasid period, cf. S.H. Griffith, 'Jews and Muslims in Christian Syriac and Arabic texts of the ninth century', *Jewish History* 3, 1988, pp. 65-94. There was also a long tradition of anti-Jewish polemic among Muslim writers. For further discussion on the use of the Bible in disputations between Jews and Muslims, cf. H. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, Princeton NJ, 1992.

[4] For instance, Theodore Abū Qurra includes testimonies within many of his works, particularly in the *Mīmar* on the Trinity, the *Mīmar* on the Incarnation of the Son of God, and within his treatise on the veneration of icons. For indices see G. Graf, *Die arabischen Schriften des Theodor Abū Qurra, Bischofs von Ḥarrān (ca. 740-820)*, Paderborn, 1910, as well as the forthcoming translations of Abū Qurra's works by J.C. Lamoreaux, *Theodore Abū Qurrah*, Provo UT, 2005.

[5] For a comprehensive discussion of the origin of scriptural collections and their use in the Patristic era, cf. M.C. Albl, *'And Scripture Cannot Be Broken': The Form and Function of the Early Christian* Testimonia *Collections*, Leiden, 1999, pp. 7-69 (esp. pp. 65-9); 97-158.

an extracted collection based on the citations of scripture in a given text. If one examines the works of early Christian Arabic writings, it is not uncommon to discover an apologist appealing to similar testimonies in his work. The proof-texts in older Greek, Latin and Syriac testimonies were translated and transformed for apologetics in later disputes with Muslims in Arabic. It is likely that these testimony collections served as the foundation for later scriptural debates in the Abbasid period.[6]

According to Sidney Griffith, the Gospel was first translated into Arabic 'for both liturgical and apologetical purposes, in the ninth century, in Palestine, under Melkite auspices'.[7] The apologetic enterprise of translating scripture into Arabic served as a defense and a response to the qur'anic assertion (5.47): 'Let the people of the Gospel judge in accordance with what God has sent down in it' (*wa-la-yaḥkum ahl al-inǰīl bi-mā anzal Allāh fīhi*). Christians who composed scriptural apologetics thoroughly revised older collections in order to consider Islamic claims and the spiritual milieu of the Qurʾan. For instance, Martin Accad has shown that Syriac Christians under medieval Islamic rule commenced with a reinterpretation of scripture due to the Islamic environment.[8] Yet these apologists preserved

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[6] In a similar fashion to Christian *testimonia*, Muslim exegetes such as ʿAlī b. Rabbān al-Ṭabarī and al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm al-Rassī would assemble proof-texts of the Bible to support Islamic teaching. For a discussion of these writers, cf. D. Thomas, 'The Bible in early Muslim anti-Christian polemic', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 7, 1996, pp. 29-38; also see his chapter in this book, 'The Bible and the *kalām*'. For a comprehensive list of the exegetical use of the four gospels by Muslim scholars, cf. M. Accad, 'The Gospel in the Muslim discourse of the ninth to the fourteenth centuries: an exegetical inventorial table', (four parts) *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 14, 2003, pp. 67-81, 205-20, 337-52, 459-79.

[7] S.H. Griffith, 'The Gospel in Arabic: an inquiry into its appearance in the first Abbasid century', *Oriens Christianus* 69, 1985, [pp. 126-67] p. 128. The oldest ms. is Sinai Arabic 151, with the Pauline Epistles, Acts of the Apostles and Catholic Epistles, dated to 867 AD, while Sinai Arabic 72, dated 897 AD, includes the four gospels in lectionary format, according to the liturgical year for the church in Jerusalem. Another source is Vatican Arabic 13, from the ninth century.

[8] Cf. M. Accad, 'Did the later Syriac Fathers take into consideration their Islamic context when reinterpreting the New Testament?', *Parole de l'Orient* 23, 1998, pp. 13-32. In his summary, he describes five principal tendencies of scriptural interpretation in the Islamic period: 1) an emphasis on the words and events that indicate the divine attributes of Christ; 2) simple terminology from pre-Chalcedonian Trinitarian arguments are utilized instead of Chalcedonian technical terms; 3) Christological arguments are cast as dynamic features, to avoid tension with scripture; 4) an emphasis on Christ as the greatest miracle worker; 5) an emphasis on redefining the

earlier collections of scriptural argumentation to affirm traditional Christian doctrine, particularly with regard to the Trinity, the Incarnation, and redemption through Jesus Christ.

In his preface to the Mingana edition of the Syriac version of *The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch before the Caliph Mahdi*, J. Rendel Harris remarks: 'We do not think that anyone will read the Patriarch's biblical arguments carefully without seeing that they are based upon a previous collection of prophecies.'[9] In this article, it is my intention briefly to examine three texts, one from the Church of the East and two from the Melkite tradition. These are: the longer Arabic version of *The Apology of Patriarch Timothy*;[10] *On the Triune Nature of God* (*Fī tathlīth Allāh al-wāḥid*),[11] an anonymous eighth-century Melkite work; and *The debate of Abū Qurra with Muslim scholars in the court of Caliph al-Ma'mūn* (*Mujādala Abī Qurra maʿa al-mutakallimīn al-muslimīn fī majlis al-khalīfa al-Ma'mūn*).[12] This article proposes to describe their scriptural arguments and consider the possibility of their use of testimony collections composed in Arabic.[13]

Based on their use of scripture, these three authors do not utilize the Bible as an undifferentiated whole. Instead, they select and clarify specific passages, particularly from the Old Testament, for exposition of Christian doctrines. According to their structure, each author employs extracts of scripture in the form of a literary supplement that functions as a catechetical and apologetic text.[14] The comprehensive nature of testimony collections meant that their style was a

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Paraclete within the Trinitarian structure of the Godhead.

[9] J. Rendel Harris, introduction to A. Mingana, ed., 'The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch before the Caliph Mahdi', *Woodbrooke Studies* no. 3, in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 12, 1928, p. 144.

[10] H. Putman, *L'église et l'Islam sous Timothée I (780-823)*, Beirut, 1975.

[11] M.D. Gibson, *An Arabic Version of the Acts of the Apostles and the Seven Catholic Epistles from an Eighth or Ninth Century MS. in the Convent of St. Katherine on Mount Sinai, with a Treatise on the Triune Nature of God, and Translation from the Same Codex* (*Studia Sinaitica* 7), London, 1899 (repr. Piscataway NJ, 2003).

[12] For an Arabic edition, cf. I. Dick, ed., *Mujādalat Abī Qurra maʿa al-mutakallimīn al-muslimīn fī majlis al-khalīfa al-Ma'mūn* (*La Discussion d'Abū Qurra avec les Ulémas Musulmans devant le Calife Al-Ma'mūn*), Aleppo, 1999.

[13] It would be quite useful to discover if there are any early examples of testimony collections in Arabic.

[14] The excerpts often appear in the second book of Cyprian's *Testimonies*, as well as the *Testimonies* of Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa. Their quotations of scripture do not match the order of either author, nor have I found evidence that they utilized these works as a direct source.

popular tool for apologists, and each writer incorporates this genre into his argument. Thus, Christian apologists with Islam borrowed a method and structure similar to that of the *testimonia* collection, along with many of its textual and logical methodologies, into the languages of Syriac and Arabic for contemporary use. Since the biblical verses typically used for debating with Islam are rarely found in pre-Islamic testimony collections, it seems to indicate there was a progressive reliance on qur'anic language for extract collections, as we shall see. These apologists were entering new territory in the realm of scriptural apologetics, without abandoning the traditional testimonies that remained valuable in disputations with Muslims.

The Apology of Patriarch Timothy

The reports of the religious dialogue between the Patriarch Timothy and the Caliph al-Mahdī, which took place in Arabic in the year 164-5/781, established a framework for serious Christian-Muslim debate in the Abbasid period. Nearly twenty years after the establishment of Baghdad as the center of the Islamic empire, their conversation was shaped by the context of nascent Islamic hegemony, the process of Arabization,[15] and the conversant scriptural exegesis developed by the Church of the East through centuries of evangelization. While the debate with the Caliph al-Mahdī occurred in Arabic, Timothy composed his text as a letter to the monk Sergius, recording the event in Syriac. In addition to the Syriac recension, there are two later Arabic recensions of the text.[16] Samir Khalil Samir addressed

[15] During the reign of the Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik (685-705), the administration underwent a process of Arabicization. The Caliph ʿUmar II (717-20) began the policy of promising political and social participation to those who converted to Islam. These inducements provoked Christian apologetic responses in Arabic and Syriac, including those of our authors.

[16] For the longer Arabic version, cf. Putman, *L'église sous Timothée*, and L. Cheikho, 'The religious dialogue which occurred between the Caliph al-Mahdi and Timothy the Patriarch' (Arabic), *Al-Machriq* 19, 1921, pp. 359-74; 408-18. For the shorter question and answer version cf. R. Caspar, 'Les versions arabes du dialogue entre le patriarche Timothée I et le calife al-Mahdî (II/VIII siècle) "Mohammed a suivi la voie des prophètes"', *Islamochristiana* 3, 1977, pp. 107-75. For the longer Syriac version, cf. Mingana, 'The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch', pp. 137-298. For the shorter version, cf. A. van Roey, 'Une apologie syriaque attribuée à Elie de Nisibe', *Le Muséon* 59, 1946, pp. 381-97.

this textual problem at an earlier Mingana symposium.[17]

As a young man, Timothy studied under the tutelage of Mar Abraham bar Dāshandād, focusing on the Bible as the literature of common discourse *par excellence*. Timothy studied the Syriac Peshiṭṭā, beginning with the Psalms, proceeding to the rest of the Old Testament, and then he studied the New Testament with its corresponding commentaries.[18] His education would have included catechetical testimony collections similar to those in the *Scholion* of Theodore Bar Kōnī, and his knowledge of Greek and Arabic is evident from his letters as well.[19] As for his method of exegesis, Timothy employed the typological interpretation of scripture. For Timothy, all that could describe Jesus as the Messiah was already prefigured in the Old Testament. The Lord revealed the coming of the Messiah through words and events that can be discerned in the Old Testament. Properly understood, these words or events presented a proof for the status of Jesus Christ as the mediator of salvation for the world. Because of the Messiah's identity, Timothy argued that Jesus' teachings in the New Testament are authoritative, consistent with Old Testament scriptures, and valid for his debate with Caliph al-Mahdī. So when Timothy argued from scripture, he adopted the premise that the New Testament was indeed the authentic link and completion of the Old Testament. When the Caliph objected to a certain doctrine such as the suffering of the Messiah, Timothy offered evidence of scriptural continuity—the typological and prophetic interpretation of the Old Testament elucidates the identity of the Messiah and the true Church.

Patriarch Timothy required a nuanced exegetical framework in order to explain his position when refuting the Caliph's claims. His apologetic technique for the dialogue included stringing quotations together in blocks, utilizing the cumulative case method of apologetics, which invoked a broad variety of scriptural citations

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[17] S.K. Samir, 'The Prophet Muḥammad as seen by Timothy I and other Arab Christian authors', in D. Thomas, ed., *Syrian Christians under Islam*, Leiden, 2001, pp. 75-106.

[18] R.B.Ter Haar Romeny, 'Biblical studies in the Church of the East: the case of Catholicos Timothy I' (*Studia Patristica* 34), Louvain, 2001, pp. 503-10.

[19] For a summary, cf. S.H. Griffith, 'Chapter ten of the *Scholion*: Theodore Bar Kônî's apology for Christianity', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 47, 1981, pp. 158-88.

as evidence for Christianity.[20] This style of presentation would have been effective for someone who had memorized or was reading from a *testimonia* collection. Thus, it is likely that Timothy employed a testimony collection as a source during his compilation of the text.[21] Based on Timothy's experience within the Syriac educational model, he would have been familiar with collections of apologetics composed in Syriac. Would he have been aware of an Arabic collection as well?

Timothy's *Apology* highlights the active spirit of dialogue between Christianity and Islam during the second/eighth century. He offered scriptural proofs for the truth of Christianity to al-Mahdī without compromising the procedures of etiquette at the court, or *majlis*.[22] However, the Caliph al-Mahdī dictated many of the topics and sources that would be used for the conversation. In the Islamic milieu, the Qur'an remained the fundamental text for Muslim and Christian apologists and polemicists. Although Patriarch Timothy had the last word on each point, he was bound by the Islamic terms of debate in the *majlis*.[23] The language of the Qur'an would shape Timothy's biblical citations in comparison with earlier testimony collections, as we shall see.

The list of topics which Patriarch Timothy addressed came to be standards for Christian-Muslim debate. The longer Arabic recension focuses on a wide variety of controversial topics among Christians

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[20] Cumulative case apologetics presents a comprehensive view of religious systems and attempts to evaluate each religion based on a system of merits developed by the author. Timothy's method gathers evidence from the fields of natural theology, history, literature, and particularly scripture, in order to affirm Christianity as the best system of belief in relation to the categories of judgment. This approach contrasts with the method of the *mutakallimūn*, who attempt to argue for the superiority of one faith based on rational human capabilities, without recourse to revelation.

[21] I presume that Patriarch Timothy is the author of our work, based on the fact that the Syriac text is part of his corpus of his letters to Sergius, and the generally non-polemical nature of the debate, which lends it credibility.

[22] S. Stroumsa, 'Ibn al-Rāwandī's *Sū' adab al-mujādala*: the role of bad manners in medieval disputations', in H. Lazarus-Yafeh, *et al.*, eds, *The Majlis*, Wiesbaden, 1999, pp. 66-83.

[23] S.H. Griffith, 'The monk in the emir's majlis: reflections on a popular genre of Christian literary apologetics in Arabic in the early Islamic period', in H. Lazarus-Yafeh, *The Majlis*, pp. 13-65. On p. 16 Griffith writes: 'The report of Timothy's dialogue played a role in the inculturation of Christian thinking into the forms of public discourse in the language of the Qur'an, featuring as it does the proceedings of a *majlis al-kalām*, a familiar *topos* in Islamic writing in Arabic.'

and Muslims. Based on the structure of the text, these topics can be divided into two primary themes: first, those which adhere to the traditional model of testimony collections used in disputations with Jewish apologists, and second, those which were relatively new collections of biblical and qur'anic verses utilized in debates with Muslims. A brief outline of these themes will elucidate the structure of the text. In the first section where Patriarch Timothy utilizes testimonies, they follow the traditional form found in earlier collections. Here, Timothy employs scriptural proofs to indicate that:

1. God is Father and Son (Jn 16.20; Ps 32(33).6),
2. God is Trinity (Ps 85(86).12; 103(104).30; 118(119).89; Is 40.8),
3. Jesus is the Word of God (Jn 1.1; 1.4; 17.5; Matt 28.19),
4. The Old Testament confirms the Messiah is Jesus (Is 7.14a; 7.14b; 9.6; 35.4-6 and 53.5; Ps 15.10; 2.7; 67.19 and 46.6; Dan 7.13-14).

In the second section, Timothy applies scriptural apologetics that were used only with Muslims. In a dispute centering on the nature of Old Testament interpretation, Timothy argues that:

1. The Spirit Paraclete is not Muḥammad (combination of Jn 15.26; 16.14 and 14.26; 1 Cor 2.10; Jn 15.26; Acts 2.1-4; Jn 16.13-15; Ps 32.6),
2. Muḥammad is not the camel rider in Is 21.7 (Is 21.2 and 21.9; Dan 7.5-6 and 2.32-3),
3. The prophecy concerning Jesus on the donkey is in Zechariah (9.9) not in Isaiah (21.7).

Briefly, the third section represents a reworked portion of older testimonies. Rather than assembling New Testament verses, Timothy chooses a working text of well-known Old Testament passages that could be used in a debate with Jews as well as Muslims. Timothy offers scriptural sources indicating that:

1. The Jewish Messiah is the culmination of the prophets (Gen 49.10; Dan 9.25 and 26; Matt 11.13),
2. The cross is life-giving (2 Cor 4.6; Ex 15.25; Num 21.9).

Regarding the first point here, Timothy changes the interpretation of the testimony collection. Originally, it was intended to show that Jesus was the culmination of the prophets. In its new context, Timothy highlights the finality of prophecy with John the Baptist

and the coming of Jesus the Messiah, to the exclusion of Muḥammad. Secondly, the veneration of the cross became a contentious practice under Muslim rule,[24] as is indicated by its mention in chapter 100/101 of *De Haeresibus* by John of Damascus.[25] Although al-Mahdī argues that the cross was an implement for crucifixion, Timothy had a ready response. He paraphrases scripture to indicate that the cross is the giver of life; through the sign of the cross the children of Israel were healed from snakebites while wandering in the wilderness.

The fourth section characterizes the innovative nature of Timothy's apologetics with Muslims. It represents one of the first attempts to quote qur'anic material in support of Christian doctrine. Timothy appeals to Q 19.34 and Q 3.55 to support the truth of the resurrection. These are the only two qur'anic quotations to appear in the longer Arabic version of the dialogue.

The fifth and final section of testimonies in his dialogue represents another reworking of older scriptural proofs. However, these are not only scriptural apologetics for the truth of Christianity, but scriptural apologetics rejecting Muslim claims. Contrary to Islamic allegations, Timothy intends to demonstrate that:

1. The Old Testament prophesies a suffering Messiah (Ps 21(22).17-19 (16-18); Is 53.5 and 50.6 or Lam 3.4, 30; Jer 11.19; Dan 9.26; Zech 13.6-7; Jn 10.17-18; allusions to Joel 2.31; Matt 27.51-2),
2. The Old Covenant has passed to the Church and cannot pass to Muslims (Jer 31.31-4; Joel 2.28-9; Joel 2.30-1; Mk 13.25; Joel 2.32a),
3. The Brothers of Israel are not the Ishmaelites (2 Sam 7.12 and 1 Chron 17.11),
4. The prophet that God said would return was Elijah, not Muḥammad (Mal 4.4-5 (3.23-4); Lk 1.13-17; Jn 1.29; Matt 3.11 and Lk 3.16; Jn 1.27),

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[24] Veneration of icons was also a controversial practice in the Byzantine tradition at this time, as is evidenced by Theodore Abū Qurra's tract supporting the custom as orthodox. Cf. S.H. Griffith, ed. and trans., *A Treatise on the Veneration of the Holy Icons; Written in Arabic by Theodore Abū Qurrah, Bishop of Harrān (C.755-C.830 A.D.)*, Louvain, 1997; S.H. Griffith, 'Theodore Abu Qurrah's Arabic tract on the Christian practice of venerating images', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105, 1985, pp. 53-73.

[25] D.J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam: The Heresy of the Ishmaelites*, Leiden, 1972, pp. 136-7.

5. The Old and New Testaments have not been corrupted (Is 53.8; Jn 1.1; Jer 1.5; Ps 2.7; Ps 108.3; Ps 72.17; Is 7.14).

Various literary features of a work point towards the use of a collection of testimonies: peculiar texts, recurrent sequences, erroneous ascriptions of authorship, editorial prefaces, comments or questions, and blocks of scriptural material for use by the controversialist.[26] Evidence pointing to the use of a testimony collection in the composition of Timothy's letter can be argued from several instances of editorial prefaces. First, note how Patriarch Timothy asserts that Jesus is the Word of God. The passage begins with an editorial formula that is typical in testimony collections: 'From the books of the prophets, David the Prophet had said' (*min kutub al-anbiyā' qad qāla Dāwūd al-nabī*). This editorial phrase occurs several times in the dialogue. Another indication of a testimony collection is found in his section concerning the prophecy, identity, and resurrection of the Messiah. The Patriarch responds to the Caliph's objections with a summary of Christian prophecy in Isaiah. The passage includes 7.14a, then 7.14b with 9.6, followed by 35.4-6, and 53.5.[27] This block of proof-texts and the repeated phrase 'another time [the prophets] testify' (*tāratan yashhadūna*) are characteristics of this genre. In addition, why also would Timothy quote Isaiah 7.14a, complete his sentence, and then quote 7.14b with the introduction: 'Another time [the prophets] enlightened us when they spoke of him' (*wa-tāratan yuṣarriḥūna lana fa-yaqūlūna*)?

When the Caliph al-Mahdī asks about prophecies to support the suffering of the Messiah, Timothy responds with a cumulative case method of verses from the Old Testament, including the Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Zechariah. Timothy repeats the characteristic method of introduction, exact quotation of each verse, and the intervening formula 'and the prophet so-and-so says thus' (*wa-ayḍan al-nabī yaqūl*). At the same time, these citations demonstrate that Timothy was working with a comprehensive collection from the entire Old Testament, and not simply from the Pentateuch.

I have given these three examples to illustrate how Timothy uti-

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[26] I have adopted the method proposed by J. Rendel Harris, *Testimonies I*, Cambridge, 1916, p. 8.

[27] All of these quotations are found in Cyprian's second book of *Testimonies*. Timothy's list does not correspond to the order in Cyprian's text.

lized testimony collections in his letter. However, when taken in the context of the entire body of the work, the testimony collection comprises only a small portion of his argument.[28] In many ways, it is the originality of his developing testimony collection that is most noteworthy. For this part I will offer two examples.

First, a collection of apologetics concerned with Islam had to answer new questions not mentioned in discussions with Jewish interlocutors, such as the identity of the Holy Spirit. The question of Muḥammad in scripture engendered a new search for proof-texts to counter Muslim arguments identifying him with the Paraclete. Timothy gathered proof-texts as evidence that when Jesus spoke about the coming of the Spirit Paraclete, Muḥammad could not be read into these verses. Thus, the segment employs a combination of verses from the Gospel of John to produce a harmonized description that rejects the identification of Muḥammad with the Holy Spirit. The passage blends Jn 15.26, 16.14, and 14.26 to show that the Paraclete is one of the Holy Trinity whom Jesus has already made manifest:

> I will send to you the Spirit Paraclete, who proceeds from the Father, whom the world has not accepted, and He dwells among you and in your heart, who discerns all things and searches all things, even the depth of God and He will remind you of all of the truth which I speak to you. Thus he glorifies me because he takes up what belongs to me, and he announces it to you.[29]

This style of combining verses would provide a foundation for later scriptural argumentation, such as that of Dionysius bar Ṣalībī.[30]

Second, Patriarch Timothy makes use of the Qur'an for his scriptural apologetics. For Timothy, the Qur'an was a viable source of apologetics, because it in fact supported the truth that Jesus died

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[28] Timothy had a clear apologetic methodology in his dialogue. Many of his arguments did not contain scripture references. Timothy utilized the Socratic method of question and answer in the dialogue. At other times, he used *kalām*, a process of question and answer, or dialectical theology. Timothy also used philosophy to explain his case. In particular, Timothy favored the syllogism and logic for his arguments. For Timothy, these methods allowed him to make claims based on natural theology.

[29] Cheikho, 'Religious dialogue', p. 368; Putman, *L'église sous Timothée*, p. 23 (Arabic).

[30] Cf. S.H. Griffith, 'Dionysius bar Ṣalībī on the Muslims', in H.J.W. Drijvers *et al.*, eds, *IV Symposium Syriacum 1984: Literary Genres in Syriac Literature* (*Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 229), Rome, 1987, pp. 353-65.

and was raised up. First he quotes *Sūrat Maryam*[31] (19.34): 'Peace be upon the day I was born and the day I die and the day I am raised alive.' By quoting from the Qur'an, he implicitly maintains that Christian scripture has not been altered; the Qur'an resonates with the truth of the Gospel. Then he utilizes *Sūrat Āl ʿImrān* (3.55): 'God said to Jesus, "I will make you die and I will raise you up to me."' Because the Qur'an is consistent with the New Testament about this matter, according to Timothy, there can be no accusation of *taḥrīf*, or corruption. This Christian reading of the Qur'an as scripture signals a dramatic shift in the identity of admissible sources for argumentation.[32] As is evident from later works, such as *The debate of Abū Qurra with the Muslim Scholars in the court of Caliph al-Ma'mūn*, this method of qur'anic borrowing became popular among Christian communities.

Based on the recensions of the dialogue, we can gather that the Patriarch created an enduring apologetic of scriptural proofs for the Church of the East. The dialogue was useful in terms of educating Christians, validating the place of the Church within the Islamic political order, and providing a popular discourse. It may be legitimate to include the work of developing a testimony collection to meet contemporary needs as a lasting legacy of Timothy's patriarchate.

On the Triune Nature of God

At this point, it is necessary to introduce another work, *On the Triune Nature of God* (*Fī tathlīth Allāh al-waḥīd*),[33] which was first published by Margaret Dunlop Gibson on the basis of a unique manuscript,

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[31] Timothy cites the verse as *Sūrat ʿĪsā*, which may have been an early name for the chapter.

[32] One of the reasons Timothy would adopt the Qur'an for his apologetics was because of the Muslim claim that the Jewish and Christian scriptures were corrupt. For Timothy, the scriptures are not distorted. This claim of corruption is the most problematic for scriptural apologetics because it rejects the very act of appropriating verses for an argument. Timothy first adopts the logical reasoning that if the scriptures were changed either by Jews or Christians, then the Old Testament would be different in each community. By virtue of their identical texts and the lack of evidence for an uncorrupted manuscript of scripture, Timothy corroborates the position that the scriptures are not corrupt.

[33] Ironically, this phrase never occurs in the text, but was the title given to the treatise by Gibson, according to her introduction in *An Arabic Version*, p. viii.

Sinai Arabic 154 (c 132-3/750-184/800).[34] This anonymous Melkite work contains more than eighty quotations from scriptures. While nearly two-thirds of the text contains citations from the Bible, it also includes many qur'anic allusions and quotations, signifying the inculturation of the writer into the Islamic milieu.[35]

Among Christian Arabic apologetic literature, *On the Triune Nature of God* can be categorized as one of the earliest works of the eighth century, perhaps c 132/750. The text shows the characteristics of a biblical and patristic apology, which corresponds with the primary stage of theology in Arabic. S. K. Samir has produced a fourfold structure for apologetic literature, which includes: 1) a biblical and homiletical approach; 2) a mixed biblical and philosophical approach; 3) a very philosophical approach; and 4) a spiritual humanistic approach.[36] Based on its utilization of scripture for spiritual and homiletic purposes, this text belongs to the first genre.

Since Mark Swanson has presented a thorough sketch of the text in an article for this symposium I will offer only a few preliminary comments.[37] Following the introduction, in the first portion of the text the author employs scripture in the way of extract collections to offer proofs concerning Christian doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation, redemption, and the veracity of Christianity.[38] The second part of the text contains an even greater number of biblical citations concerning the authority of Christ based on Old Testament interpretation. The author extols the unity of God, particularly in regard to the Father and the Son, admonishing his reader to 'fear

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[34] For a discussion of the history of the manuscript and its structure, cf. S.K. Samir, 'The earliest Arab apology for Christianity (c. 750)', in S.K. Samir and J.S. Nielsen, eds, *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750-1258)*, Leiden, 1994, pp. 57-114.

[35] In the late nineteenth century, Gibson wrote: 'The writer's explanations of the Trinity are ingenious and interesting, but his quotations from the Bible and the Coran are more eclectic than accurate' (Gibson, *An Arabic Version*, p. ix). Her assessment focuses on the antiquity of the text and does not take into account the existence of a scriptural collection from which these verses were utilized.

[36] Samir, 'The earliest Arab apology', pp. 110-14.

[37] See M. Swanson, 'Beyond prooftexting (2): the use of the Bible in some early Arabic Christian apologies'; see also an earlier article: M. Swanson, 'Beyond prooftexting: approaches to the Qur'ān in some early Arabic Christian apologies', *The Muslim World* 88, 1998, pp. 297-319.

[38] Although the author does not give clear organizational guidelines, the first part of the text has an established structure as found in Samir, 'The earliest Arab apology', p. 66.

God and follow the word of Christ' (*fa-ittaqū Allāh wa-itbaʿū qawl al-Masīḥ*). Then he returns to salvation history, according to Old Testament testimonies about the birth and Incarnation of the Messiah. He utilizes the New Testament and the doctrine of miracles for an extended apologetic about Christ as the wonderworker *par excellence*.[39] The final topic in the Gibson edition is baptism, although this was not the end of the original text.[40] Throughout the work, the author makes constant appeals to scripture in a manner that is not unlike Patriarch Timothy.

In 1901 J. Rendel Harris published a review discussing the possibility of a testimony collection in this work, and Mark Swanson has also revisited this issue in his article.[41] Samir K. Samir has also concluded that the second part of the text 'is essentially a series of "Testimonia" (*shawāhid*), i.e. of biblical quotations'.[42] Therefore, I will give only a summary of the evidence concerning the collection. What is significant is that many of the same methods of apologetics arise in this treatise as in Timothy's *Apology*, such as blocks of prophetic proof-texts, literary formulas, and conflation and mixture of verses. Despite this, the two texts rarely quote the same verse. Only once do they both present the same argument, although this does not pertain to scripture: when Timothy and the anonymous author explain the Incarnation of the Word of God, they use the ubiquitous analogy of the sun, light, and heat to demonstrate the eternally begotten nature of the Son.[43] But the most remarkable

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[39] Cf. Gibson, *An Arabic Version*, f. 124b, p. 27 (English), p. 98 (Arabic). For the writer, faith in Christ is rewarded just as it was for the paralytic, the blind man, the leper, and the man with the withered hand. The verification of faith has come in the miracles Christ performed.

[40] S.K. Samir has recovered an estimated ten additional pages at the conclusion of the treatise while re-examining the manuscript on microfilm (cf. n. 51 below). I have not yet seen these additions.

[41] J. Rendel Harris, 'A tract on the triune nature of God', *American Journal of Theology* 5, 1901, pp. 75-86. His primary interest in this work was as a witness to earlier variant traditions in Christianity that could be gleaned from gospel accounts not contained in Bibles or lectionaries. Harris attempts to discover new material that would point to a variant tradition in the life of Jesus Christ, something even earlier than the canonical gospels. My interest is in how the original author attempts to present cogently the Christian faith in an apologetic discourse that is conversant with the emerging language of Arabic and Islam.

[42] Samir, 'The earliest Arab apology', p. 65.

[43] Cf. Cheikho, 'Religious dialogue', p. 360; Putman, *L'église sous Timothée*, p. 8 (Arabic); Gibson, *An Arabic Version*, p. 5 (English), p. 77 (Arabic); and Dick, *Mujādalat Abī*

evidence for the use of a testimony collection is a reference by the anonymous author himself to the use of systematic extracts: 'If we had wanted to extract from the sayings of the prophets about the birth of the Messiah, by God's permission we are able to get what we want of that' (*wa-law aradnā an nastakhrij min qawl al-anbiyā' 'alā mawlūd al-Masīḥ, qadarnā bi-idhn Allāh 'alā mā shi'nā min dhālika*). As we shall see, his use of scripture supports this claim.

There are nine occasions where a scripture verse in *On the Triune Nature of God* matches one cited by Timothy in his *Apology*.[44] Each example belongs to the genre of testimonies, in addition to the fact that they all appear in the work of the fourth-century writer Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa. They represent proof-texts for the Trinity, the Word of God, the Father and the Son, and the coming, birth and miracles of the Messiah. There are two passages that are most noteworthy for the testimony hypothesis, Dan 2.34-5 and Zech 9.9, which appear in the same order here as in Timothy's *Apology*.[45] However, Patriarch Timothy employs the verses to refute the claim that Muḥammad is prefigured by the mention of a camel rider in the Old Testament, while the Melkite writer takes the passages in the context of Old Testament prophecies about Mary's virgin birth. The coincidence is quite remarkable in this case.[46] Based on their use of identical passages, it appears that the anonymous author of *On the Triune Nature of God* has retained a more traditional argument that utilizes these passages for verification of Mary's identity and her virgin birth. Because Timothy has a different purpose for his argument, he structures the same passages in response to a specific Muslim claim. This example represents the most prominent evidence for the use of a *testimonia* collection by these authors.

The writer of *On the Triune Nature of God* also employs the use of block proof-texts to demonstrate that the prophets were expecting the

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Qurra, pp. 104-5 (Arabic).

[44] Ps 32(33).6: on the Trinity and the Word of God; Ps 2.7-8: on the Father and the Son; Zech 9.9: the entry of the Messiah into Jerusalem; Gen 49.10-11: the coming of the Messiah as king; Is 7.14: the virgin birth of the Messiah; Is 9.6: the titles of the Messiah; Dan 2.34-5: the Messiah is born without seed; Is 35.3-4: miracles of the Messiah; Is 35.5-6: miracles of the Messiah.

[45] Gibson, *An Arabic Version*, p. 30 (English), p. 101 (Arabic); Putman, *L'église sous Timothée*, p. 29 (Arabic).

[46] Cheikho, 'Religious dialogue', pp. 371-2; Putman, *L'église sous Timothée*, p. 29 (Arabic); Gibson, *An Arabic Version*, p. 30 (English), p. 101 (Arabic).

coming of the Messiah. The author quotes from Isaiah, the Psalms, and Habakkuk,[47] as well as a testimony that reads: 'There is no intercessor and no king, but the Lord will come and save us' (*lā shafiʿ wa-lā malik wa-lākin al-rabb ya'tī fa-yukhalliṣunā*).[48] The author is in fact translating from a Syriac version of Isaiah 63.9 that may have belonged to a testimony collection that interpreted the passage in this manner.[49] In one block, the anonymous writer does not quote Ps 117(118).26-7 word for word, but rather edits the verse, just as it is found in the Byzantine liturgy in use during the communion of the faithful during the eighth century. He translates: 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; God is our Lord, he has revealed himself to us' (*mubārak alladhī ya'tī bi-ism al-rabb Allāhumma rabbunā aṭlaʿanā*).[50] He also quotes the Lord's Prayer in its liturgical form, with the doxology. This method of citation is not unlike those found in extract collections, which were often written for the purpose of liturgical use.

Finally, *On the Triune Nature of God* points towards developing testimony collections in its apologetics with Islam. While Timothy only quoted the Qur'an twice in his work, our anonymous author directly cites the Qur'an seven times in the Gibson text.[51] He also employs numerous characteristic traits of qur'anic language, such as in the introductory doxology:

> We ask you, O God, by your mercy and your power to put us among those who know your truth and follow your will and avoid your wrath and praise your beautiful names and proclaim your sublime examples. You are the compassionate, the merciful.[52]

As has been noted previously, the qur'anic allusions in this text are apparent, while there is no clear reference to the Christian faith.[53]

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[47] Gibson, *An Arabic Version*, p. 10 (English), p. 82 (Arabic). Harris believes the first two quotations are from Is 64.1 and Ps 80.1 (actually he intends 79(80).2). I believe the two may be a conflated quotation from 2 Sam 22.10-11. Following this is Is 63.9, Ps 107.20, Hab 2.3, and Ps 117(118).26 and 27.

[48] Gibson, *An Arabic Version*, p. 10 (English), p. 82 (Arabic).

[49] Harris, 'A tract on the triune nature of God', pp. 78-9.

[50] Gibson, *An Arabic Version*, p. 10 (English), p. 82 (Arabic).

[51] According to S.K. Samir, 'The earliest Arab apology', p. 59, he was able to discover roughly ten new pages belonging to the document.

[52] Samir, 'The earliest Arab apology', pp. 67-8; Gibson, *An Arabic Version*, p. 2 (English), p. 74 (Arabic). I have utilized the Arabic text as it is found in Samir's edition.

[53] Samir, 'The earliest Arab apology', pp. 69-70.

So the author must have been comfortable with the Arabic language as a cultural reality. Because of the impact of Arabic, mediated through the Qur'an, he does not hesitate to quote the Qur'an in conjunction with the Bible to make an apologetic point.[54] However, for this writer the Qur'an is only supplementary evidence to confirm the truth of what is already known. For example, when discussing the Trinity he writes:

> He said [in the Qur'an], 'Believe in God, and in His Word; and also in the Holy Spirit', but the Holy Spirit has brought down 'mercy and guidance from your Lord',[55] but why should I prove it from this and enlighten [you] when we find in the Torah and the Prophets and the Psalms and the Gospel, and you find it in the Qur'an that God and His Word and His Spirit are one God and one Lord?[56]

As a further example to support the doctrine of the Trinity, the author quotes a mixture of verses from the Qur'an (70.39; 54.11 and 18.48) that use the royal 'we' to affirm its continuity with the Bible.[57] In order to show that Christ is Creator, the writer quotes *Sūrat Āl ʿImrān* 3.49, where Jesus makes a bird of clay and breathes life into it. For the author, Christ is in heaven just as the Psalms declare, and this is verified for Muslims in *Sūrat Āl ʿImrān* 3.55. In addition, the author adds *Sūrat Maryam* 19.5 and *Sūrat Āl ʿImrān* 3.39 to a scriptural block as proofs for the value of the ascetic life and the conclusion of the prophetic line with John the Baptist. It is through this Christian reading of the Qur'an that our author accomplishes his ends of presenting the Christian worldview, while synthesizing his work with a testimony collection.

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[54] For a discussion of the thought in this work, cf. Swanson, 'Beyond prooftexting', pp. 297-319.

[55] This is a conflation of verses from the Qur'an that have been changed to fit the context, including Q 4.171 and 16.102.

[56] Gibson, *An Arabic Version*, pp. 5-6 (English), p. 77 (Arabic).

[57] 'You will find it in the Qur'an that: "We created man in misery", and "we have opened the gates of heaven with water pouring down", and it says: "You came to us alone, just as we created you at first."'

The Debate of Theodore Abū Qurra with Muslim Scholars in the Court of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn

The disputation text attributed to Theodore Abū Qurra (c 138/755-c 215/830) reveals a dramatic shift in scriptural apologetics for Christians in comparison with the other two works. In a different text preserved only in Greek, Abū Qurra refers to a discussion in which his Muslim interlocutor objects to his use of the Bible: 'Persuade me not from your Isaiah or Matthew, for whom I have not the slightest regard, but from compelling, acknowledged, common notions.'[58] But in this Arabic account, Abū Qurra responds to the same challenge with a testimony collection not of Bible verses, but of passages from the Qur'an.[59] The text purports to be an account of a ninth-century debate between Theodore Abū Qurra, Melkite bishop of Ḥarrān, and several *mutakallimūn* at the court of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn, held in the year 214/829.[60] There are a variety of manuscripts in existence, including both Melkite and Jacobite recensions,[61] with the oldest text dating to the year 707-8/1308. This evidence does not necessarily date the account to the ninth century,[62] although the thirteenth-century anonymous Syriac *Chronicon ad Annum Christi 1234 Pertinens* mentions that Abū Qurra participated in a debate at the court of al-Ma'mūn when he was on a war campaign against the Byzantines in the year 214/829:

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[58] Theodore Abū Qurra, Greek Opusculum 24, *PG* XCVII, col. 1556B. This example is taken from a comprehensive article detailing the various attitudes towards the Bible in Muslim-Christian discourse. Cf. S.H. Griffith, 'Arguing from scripture: the Bible in the Christian/Muslim encounter in the Middle Ages', in T. Hefferman and T. Burman, eds, *Scripture and Pluralism*, Leiden, 2005, pp. 29-58.

[59] For further examples of intertextual works in the medieval period, cf. J.C. Reeves, ed., *Bible and Qur'ān: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality*, Atlanta GA, 2003.

[60] For a thorough introduction to the text with some portions translated into English, cf. S.H. Griffith, 'The Qur'ān in Arab Christian texts: the development of an apologetical argument: Abū Qurrah in the maǧlis of Al-Ma'mūn', *Parole de l'Orient* 24, 1999, pp. 203-33; Griffith, 'The monk in the emir's *majlis*'.

[61] There are 15 MSS in the Melkite family, and 11 in the Jacobite/Coptic family. In the Jacobite recension, Abū Qurra is identified with Simon Ḥabsannās of Ṭūr 'Abdīn. Clearly some manuscript copyists, in different times and locations, incorporated new materials into some manuscripts to enhance the account, and thus produced a more extensive form of the account.

[62] G. Graf included the text with the inauthentic works of Theodore Abū Qurra, cf. G. Graf, *Geschichte der Christlichen Arabischen Literatur*, vol. II, Vatican, 1947, pp. 21-3.

> Maʾmūn came and arrived in Ḥarrān. Theodore, bishop of Ḥarrān, called Abū Qurra, had a conversation with Maʾmūn. There was a long debate between them about the faith of the Christians. This debate is written in a special book, for anyone who wants to read it.[63]

The Syriac compiler of *Ad Annum 1234 Pertinens* utilized a now lost chronicle belonging to Dionysius of Tell Maḥrē, the Jacobite patriarch of Antioch from 203/818-230-1/845. As one who occasionally traveled with Caliph al-Maʾmūn and his court, Dionysius' chronicle provided detailed information on events from the first portion of the third/ninth century in the Abbasid period. In addition to this evidence, the Coptic author Abū al-Barakāt Ibn Kabar (d. 724/1324) mentions Theodore Abū Qurra among the Christian Arabic writers in his catalog, and he attributes a famous debate to Abū Qurra, along with some treatises.[64] Since Abū al-Barakāt highlights the debate text by mentioning it separately, it must have garnered attention from a prominent audience. In conjunction with the fact that there was a Jacobite recension of the text as well as a Melkite recension, it is legitimate to assert, based on the number of manuscripts, that the debate account was one of the most popular dispute texts in Christian apologetics.

The debate is clearly an apologetic that attempts to commend Christian doctrine through the use of Christian interpretations of the Qurʾan. While there are only ten references to the Old and New Testaments in the entire work, the character Theodore Abū Qurra utilizes sixty-six different passages from the Qurʾan, many of them a number of times, in order to respond to Muslim claims and to assert the superiority of Christian faith. What sort of implications does this have for the development of testimony collections? Let us first examine the biblical passages in context.

Theodore Abū Qurra enters the court of the Caliph al-Maʾmūn, where scholars from across the Islamic empire have assembled. The account mentions eight specific names, though we cannot directly attribute any of the names to historical personages at this time. After al-Maʾmūn begins the debate with a question on circumcision,

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[63] I.-B. Chabot, ed., *Anonymi Auctoris Chronicon ad Annum Christi 1234 Pertinens* (*CSCO* 15), Paris, 1916, p. 23.

[64] W. Riedel, *Der Katalog der christlichen Schriften in arabischer Sprache von Abu l-Barakat*, Göttingen, 1902, pp. 650-1; S.K. Samir, *Abū al-Barakāt Ibn Kabar, Miṣbāḥ al-zulma fī īḍāḥ al-khidma*, Cairo, 1971, p. 301.

Abū Qurra replies with a thorough mastery of quotations from the Qur'an, while only occasionally utilizing biblical verses. On the subject of circumcision, Abū Qurra alludes to Genesis 1:26 along with Q 38.75 in order to prove that the uncircumcised state of Christians is the state God intends for his creatures:

> Al-Ma'mūn said to Abū Qurra: I want to ask you about something.
> Abū Qurra replied: What is it, my lord?
> He said: O Abū Qurra, do you not know that the foreskin is unclean?
> Abū Qurra replied: O Commander of the Faithful, do you not know that God, mighty and exalted be He, created our father Adam from dust and he breathed in him with the breath of life? (Q 3.59; 32.9)
> He replied: Yes.
> Abū Qurra said: Did God, praise be to Him, form him with his right hand according to his image and likeness?
> He replied: Yes.
> Abū Qurra said: Would God create something unclean and form him according to his image and likeness (Gen 1.26) and have him dwell in His Paradise?
> Al-Ma'mūn said: God forbid that He would create something unclean!
> Abū Qurra said: Therefore we are now like our father Adam, peace be upon Him.
> Al-Ma'mūn laughed and he bowed his head.[65]

The debate text also utilizes traditional exegesis of scripture to show that Jesus is the Word of God. Abū Qurra seeks to show the continuity of the Old Testament (Ps 32 (33).6) and the New Testament (Jn 1.1) with the qur'anic claim that Jesus is Word of God and His Spirit.[66] The text defends the dignity of the Word and the Spirit with these verses and a reference to Matt. 28.19 in a later discussion concerning the Trinity, but the Qur'an remains the primary text for theological discussion.

With the exception of these verses mentioned above, no other biblical passage can be ascribed to a testimony tradition. Rather, the

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[65] Dick, *Mujādalat Abī Qurra*, p. 70 (Arabic). All of the following English translations are my own renderings of the Arabic text. For a discussion of al-Ma'mūn as a defender of Abū Qurra in this account and in the Christian tradition in general, cf. M. Swanson, 'The Christian al-Ma'mūn tradition', in D. Thomas, ed., *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule: Church Life and Scholarship in 'Abbasid Iraq* (*The History of Christian-Muslim Relations* 1), Leiden, 2003, pp. 63-92.

[66] Dick, *Mujādalat Abī Qurra*, p. 86 (Arabic).

text makes use of scriptural passages that fit the particular context of the situation, such as Abū Qurra's response that Jesus prayed not because it was necessary, but in order to provide an example for his followers (Matt 6.9), or that Christians are under Islamic rule because they are beloved of God (Prov 3:12): 'He whom the Lord loves, He reproves him; and He disciplines the men with whom He is well pleased.'

As for the author's use of the Qur'an in the debate, only his mention of Q 3.55 matches a single instance in Timothy's *Apology*. The variety and order of passages from the Qur'an are distinctive from other Christian readings of the Qur'an, such as the *Risāla* of ʿAbd al-Masīḥ al-Kindī.[67] Therefore, we may identify the Abū Qurra text as representative of the shifting enterprise of Christian apologetics as a whole. Since few Muslims would accept the authority of the Bible, Christian apologists appealed to the Qur'an as a point of common and reasonable discourse, provided it contained convincing material. This method of argumentation, even to the deliberate exclusion of biblical testimonies in favour of qur'anic testimonies[68] signaled a willingness to argue according to the Islamic terms of debate.

Conclusion

A Christian Arab apologist in the first Abbasid century was by necessity a scholar of scripture. It would not be incorrect to assert that Arabic Christianity in this period continued to maintain the styles and methods of Patristic exegesis and tradition. By the turn of the third/ninth century, Christian Arab writers did not hesitate to borrow and adapt these older apologetic methods for use in education and prevention of conversion to Islam.[69] Thus, one could say that

[67] For instance, see the utilization of scripture in this work, anonymously attributed to ʿAbd al-Masīḥ al-Kindī. An Italian translation and indices are available from L. Bottini, ed., *Al-Kindī: Apologia del Cristianesimo* (*PCAC* 4), Milan, 1998. There is an English translation available in N.A. Newman, ed., *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue: A Collection of Documents from the First Three Islamic Centuries (632-900 A.D.). Translations with Commentary*, Hatfield, PA, 1993.

[68] I have not dealt with the question of qur'anic testimonies in the text. I am not aware of any scriptural correlation between this debate and other apologetic texts. I hope to examine the question of qur'anic *testimonia* in both the Christian and Islamic tradition in the near future.

[69] It is important to note that these texts were primarily written for a Christian audi-

apologetic tracts were manuals for the study of scripture, and testimony collections served as the theological manuals of apologists.

In addition, Christian Arab authors sought to locate new verses of scripture that would answer the questions posed by their Muslims interlocutors, in order to commend a Christian 'worldview'.[70] Their purpose was to weave testimony collections and new 'scripture' texts, both biblical and qur'anic, into the fabric of their apologies within the Islamic environment. While they drew upon testimony collections as sources for their apologetics, these collections were no longer recognizable in comparison with those of a century prior to the rise of Islam. The authors reworked their testimony collections, to be passed on to later Christian apologists facing new challenges.[71]

From our study, we can tentatively produce some conclusions about the nature of testimony collections among Christian apologists in the early Abbasid period. 1) There is a concerted attempt to maintain established arguments from the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition that continue effectively to commend Christian doctrine in compositions concerned with Islam. The Old Testament proofs for the Trinity, Jesus Christ as Word of God, and the prophecies concerning the Incarnation, birth, suffering, death and resurrection of the Messiah continue to appear along with traditional arguments and familiar passages, particularly from Genesis, the Psalms, Isaiah, Daniel and Zechariah. 2) There is an emphasis on reinterpreting Old and New Testament passages to counter the Muslim challenge of 'Islamicizing' the biblical text. The reinterpretation involves a two-step process. First, the writer situates the verse quoted by a Muslim in its 'proper' context, i.e., a Christian interpretation. Then, the passage is re-presented with an assortment of new scriptural extracts

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ence, and thus serve as catechetical and homiletic works, in addition to their apologetic purpose in addressing Muslims.

[70] See Mark Swanson's chapter in this book for more information about how testimony collections support a Christian worldview and offer reasons for Muslims to approach the witness of the Christian scriptures in earnest.

[71] The Crusades and other historical factors shaped the response of the Jacobite Metropolitan Dionysius Bar Ṣalībī in his sixth/twelfth-century polemical works. Professor Rifaat Ebied plans a full critical edition with an English translation of his polemical tracts, as well as a comparison with Jewish, Muslim and Christian writers of the time. Cf. A. Mingana, 'An ancient Syriac translation of the Kur'ān exhibiting new verses and variants', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 9, 1925, pp. 188-235; J. de Zwaan, ed., *The Treatise of Dionysius bar Salibhi against the Jews*, Leiden, 1906.

to refute Islamic biblical interpretation. 3) In polemical disputation texts, there is an increasing reliance on Christian collections of favorable qur'anic readings.[72] Due to the accusations of corruption (*taḥrīf*), Christians writing in Arabic employed qur'anic verses more frequently to support older testimony collections. In our example from *The Debate of Abū Qurra*, the composer has nearly done away with the biblical text completely, in order to present a persuasive Christianized reading of the Qur'an for his audience. 4) Based on the evidence of these texts, it does not appear that writers were drawing upon Arabic testimony collections, but on translations of existing materials in Greek or Syriac, and supporting them with Christian collections of qur'anic passages.[73] While there is clear evidence of Christian Arabic *testimonia* from the Qurʾan that have been melded into testimony collections, there is no evidence in these authors of a biblical testimony collection composed in Arabic. Therefore, in the search for the origins of the Arabic Bible, testimony collections do not provide fruitful evidence to push back the composition of scripture in Arabic into an earlier period. Instead, the remarkable characteristic of Christian apologetics in Arabic is that the development of testimony collections found its primary impulse not in the Arabic Bible, but in an increasingly thorough evaluation of the Qur'an.[74]

[72] Concomitant with the increased use of the Qur'an by Christians was an increasing emphasis for arguing from common principles in the area of *'ilm al-kalām*, which I have not discussed in this work.

[73] Part of this reality stemmed from the difficulties that Arab Christian authors had in translating terms of traditional doctrine into Arabic in such a way that it would not compromise the theological meaning.

[74] When these authors quote Christian scripture in Arabic, their non-Arabic native language and their ecclesiastical identity serve as foundations for their translation. Therefore, it is possible to make the claim that the first authentic attempts at producing a 'Bible' compendium of theology in Arabic were the collections of qur'anic proofs that supported Christian scripture. In fact, Christian Arabic testimony collections were not useful for common discourse with Muslims apart from the nascent Christian readings of the Qur'an.

THE BIBLE AND THE *KALĀM*

DAVID THOMAS

Early Islamic theological thinking developed in a fiercely competitive multi-faith context. In the towns and cities of the late Umayyad and early Abbasid empires Muslims vied with Christians and others to present the truest account of reality in its transcendent and contingent states. And there was, at least for a time, a vogue for debates between faith representatives, analyses of rival doctrines, and easy cross-fertilisation of ideas. In this atmosphere, followers of the faiths learnt a great deal about and from one another. Many inquisitive Muslims, for example, became thoroughly acquainted not only with the major Christian doctrines but also with Christian origins and history, and with the many sectarian teachings that orthodoxy had condemned as heresy. They were also able to quote key verses from the Bible. Despite this, the majority of Muslims were surprisingly uncurious about Christianity and other faiths. Their sole interest was in how the teachings of these faiths could be used to demonstrate the correctness and coherence of Muslim doctrine as it developed into an all-embracing system. In their eyes, other faiths and their scriptures had been superseded by their own, and there was little profit in studying them except to discover their errors. Thus, the Bible remained largely unexplored by Muslim theologians in the early centuries, not only because its languages made it largely inaccessible to all but a few, but also because its contents were widely considered unreliable.

Early Islamic theology and Christianity

The relationship between the earliest theological thinking in Islam and Christianity remains a matter of debate. Some think that Muslims were deeply influenced in the issues they first considered by the questions current among Christian scholars under their rule. Others see less influence, and rather Muslims being challenged by

Christian discussions to search for answers in their own resources.[1] While there must surely have been some influence, if only of the kind that led Muslims to awareness of the issues implicit in their revealed texts—the precise character of a strictly unified Divinity, or the scope of human freedom and responsibility in relation to an overwhelmingly omnipotent God—it seems clear that at least from the time that any substantive records survive, from about 200/815 onwards, Islamic theological thinking had been established on sophisticated methodological lines, and with its own agenda of questions generated by reflection on its own internal tradition of teaching.

This suggests a lesser degree of extraneous influence rather than a greater. But what is striking from the records that survive is that almost every theologian of note from the ninth century on wrote works against Christianity and other faiths alongside works on the nature of God, the nature of the material world, politics, and other native Muslim matters.[2] Only a small fraction of these is extant, unfortunately, but if those that are typify the approach generally adopted towards the other faith, then it appears that their authors were only interested in those aspects that had a direct bearing upon Islamic thought itself.

Some examples will illustrate this point. In the mid-third/ninth century the independent-minded rationalist theologian Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq wrote his *Radd ʿalā al-thalāth firaq min al-Naṣārā*,[3] one of the longest and most detailed refutations of Christianity that has come down from any Muslim author. In his introduction Abū ʿĪsā hints that he knows many details of Christian faith and history, including the circumstances in which the Nicene Creed was agreed, and the beliefs of a series of heterodox sub-sects.[4] But in the body of

[1] Cf. J. van Ess, 'The beginnings of Islamic theology', in J.E. Murdoch and E.D. Sylla, eds, *The Cultural Context of Medieval Learning*, Dordrecht and Boston, 1975, pp. 87-111; and for a summary of the various positions, G.S. Reynolds, *A Muslim Theologian in the Sectarian Milieu: ʿAbd al-Jabbār and the Critique of Christian Origins*, Leiden, 2004, pp. 21-8.

[2] For an account of the ones known from the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, cf. D. Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam: Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's 'Against the Trinity'*, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 31-50.

[3] Ed. and trans. D. Thomas in *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam: Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's 'Against the Trinity'*, and *Early Muslim Polemic against Christianity: Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's 'Against the Incarnation'*, Cambridge, 2002.

[4] Thomas, *Trinity*, pp. 70-3.

the work itself he restricts himself entirely to the two doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, which he calls the Uniting of the divine and human natures in Christ. He examines these in meticulous detail, and shows that the doctrinal formulations of the major Christian denominations are rationally incoherent and fraught with internal inconsistencies.

About fifty years later, the Baghdad Muʿtazilī Abū al-ʿAbbās ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad, al-Nāshiʾ al-Akbar (d. 293/906) did something very similar. His work, which was probably entitled *Fī al-maqālāt*,[5] and has survived in severely truncated form,[6] is on the main doctrines that he knew about, Islamic and non-Islamic, including the teachings of Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians and Muʿtazila. In his chapter on Christianity, which is by far the longest among the surviving fragments, he gives a full, though brief, account of the Trinity and Incarnation, and also a long description of the Christologies of over twenty earlier and contemporary sub-sects. The details he includes convey a strong impression that he possessed an extensive knowledge of Christianity. But then in the refutation with which he concludes this chapter, like Abū ʿĪsā he does no more than demonstrate the flaws in the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, with no further comment on other doctrines or the heterodox Christologies he so laboriously summarises earlier.

It cannot be coincidence that these two Muslim theologians are only concerned with the two Christian doctrines which they attack. That it is not is confirmed by a third theologian, the later third/ninth-century Baṣra Muʿtazilī master Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī (d. 303/915-6), whose otherwise unknown refutation of Christianity can be glimpsed from fragments quoted by the fourth/tenth-century Muʿtazilī ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī.[7] Like the other two works, this consists of a descriptive introduction followed by a refutation, and here, if the surviving passages are representative of the whole, details extraneous to the author's purpose are excluded and both

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[5] Cf. D. Thomas, *Christian Doctrines in Islamic Theology*, Leiden, forthcoming.

[6] Ed. J. van Ess, *Frühe muʿtazilitische Häresiographie*, Beirut, 1971, pp. 73-87.

[7] For a translation and study of these fragments, cf. D. Thomas, 'A Muʿtazilī response to Christianity: Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾi's attack on the Trinity and Incarnation', in R. Ebied and H. Teule, eds, *Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage in Honour of Father Prof. Dr. Samir Khalil Samir S.I. at the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, Leuven, 2004, pp. 279-313.

the introduction and refutation focus entirely on the Trinity and Incarnation. In fact, Abū ʿAlī goes further than either Abū ʿĪsā or al-Nāshi' al-Akbar, for he omits all reference to the context of the beliefs, the names of the denominations with which they are connected, and the reasons why Christians developed them, and treats them simply as propositions which can be subjected to analysis according to Islamic theological method.

It is a curious fact that while these theologians show they have extensive knowledge about Christianity, they are only interested in the two doctrines that have a direct relationship to Islam in that they threaten to dissolve the strict unity of God into a Godhead of three or more distinct entities, and confuse the transcendent distinctiveness of God by bringing him into an intimate relationship with a created human in the body of Christ. It would appear that in these theological refutations of Christianity the authors are primarily concerned to defend the tenets of their own faith, and they see this other faith effectively as a series of elements that can be treated as separate instances of rival accounts of doctrine, and more seriously as examples of where doctrine is mistaken.

Given this concentration and emphasis, it is not altogether surprising that these texts contain little from the Bible, and almost nothing about the Bible as scripture. Al-Nāshi' al-Akbar is more or less alone in discussing Christian points that he says are based on scripture but, like his other arguments, these are concerned with the issue of divinity and not with the Bible as such. His arguments are that the Christian use of Matthew 28.19, with its reference to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, offers no help in identifying the status of the members of the Trinity—

> Here there is no clear indication that they are eternal or temporal or that they are one substance or otherwise, nor in the Gospel is there any utterance which suggests substance or hypostases;[8]

and also that the unique divine Sonship of Jesus cannot be derived from the Gospel in view of Jesus' words in John 20.17, 'I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God', and with identifications in the Torah of Israel as 'firstborn son of God'.[9]

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[8] Van Ess, *Häresiographie*, p. 82. The quotation of the verse itself has the curious *l.n.d.r*, which van Ess tentatively amends to *andhirū*, 'caution'.

[9] Ibid.

Such verses strongly imply that the title 'Son of God' cannot be understood in a literal sense.

Al-Nāshi''s use of the Bible in this brief argument does not imply any admission of its authority or authenticity, for he simply uses texts that Christians are compelled to acknowledge in order to disprove their own arguments. It is a matter of consistency on their part, not of acceptance on his part.

The single best-known statement about the nature and authenticity of Christian scripture from a third/ninth-century theologian occurs in the reply of Abū ʿUthmān al-Jāḥiẓ, the Muʿtazilī thinker and essayist, to a group of Muslims who were being harassed by Christians with awkward questions about belief. His letter is discursive, and goes into vivid details about Christians and their ways. At one point he speaks disparagingly about the origin of the Gospels, as follows:

> They received their religion from four individuals, two of them according to their claim from the disciples John and Matthew, and two from those who responded later, *al-mustajība*, Mark and Luke. These four were not safeguarded against error, forgetfulness, intention to lie, collusion on matters, agreement to share leadership and mutually allowing what had been allotted to each. If the [Christians] say: They were too fine to lie intentionally, had memories too good to forget anything, were far above making an error in the religion of God the exalted or losing anything committed to them; we say: The differences in their accounts of the Gospel, the contradictions in meaning of their writings, and their differences over Christ himself, together with the differences in their legal teachings are evidence that what we have said about them is correct and that you have been careless about them. It cannot be denied that one such as Luke said what is wrong because he was not a disciple and had been a Jew a few days before. Those who according to you were disciples were better than Luke in Christ's eyes, judging by appearance, in purity, noble character and blameless behaviour.[10]

These trenchant criticisms, the source of which al-Jāḥiẓ does not disclose, sum up the reasons why no Muslim would show much interest in the Gospels, and they may provide a strong subsidiary reason why theologians in the third/ninth century appear almost to have ignored Christian scripture altogether. But, as we have said

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[10] *Fī al-radd ʿalā al-Naṣārā*, ed. J. Finkel in *Thalāth rasāʾil li-Abī ʿUthmān al-Ǧāḥiẓ*, Cairo, 1926, p. 24.

above, the principle reason is that the interest most of them appear to have shown in Christianity is confined to those elements in which it issues a direct challenge to Muslim doctrines.

Muslim systematic treatises and Christianity

Very few of the theological works of leading scholars in the third/ninth century have survived, and we are compelled to resort to references and quotations in later authors in order to build an impression of the questions they debated and the methods they used. While this is far from satisfactory, it does show that third/ninth-century Islamic theology achieved an estimable degree of sophistication and attained the character of a science that was employed to discover the true nature of reality, comprising God, the contingent world, and the relationship between the two. It was not merely an apologetic discourse concerned to defend the dogmas of faith by the use of apposite arguments, for it has claims to have been a method of mapping and explaining the way the world is. This gives the reason why in third/ninth-century anti-Christian texts there is little evidence of interest in the whole range of Christian beliefs and doctrines, but only in those doctrines that relate to Islamic equivalents.

This trend, which admittedly must be largely surmised in the first Abbasid century, is continued and elaborated in the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries, when for the first time separate questions of theology are brought together in treatises where they are arranged into the earliest systematic theologies of Islam. Among the first of these appear to have been the lost *Kitāb al-fuṣūl* of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/935), and the *Kitāb al-tawḥid* of Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944). Other early examples include the *Kitāb al-tamhīd* of Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) and the *Kitāb al-mughnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa-al-ʿadl* of ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025). What is striking about all of them is that they combine the exposition of positive Islamic doctrines with the refutation of Christian and other non-Islamic doctrines, as though they bring together the third/ninth century-works on separate points of theology and the refutations of points in non-Islamic faiths. In these treatises the relationship between exposition and refutation provides an instructive indication of the relative importance of Christianity and other faiths in the structure of Islamic thought.

The earliest extant work in which we can see the emerging structure of a systematic theology is al-Māturīdī's *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*.[11] Although few indications of clear divisions are present, its contents suggest that it is composed in five parts: a brief epistemological introduction; a long exposition of the being of God and his characteristics; prophethood; divine and human action; faith.[12] Of these, the middle section on prophethood would appear to be crucial, since it is primarily through prophets that knowledge of God and his will are made known to humankind so that action and faith can properly conform to his intention.

In this structure al-Māturīdī combines refutations of points in non-Muslim beliefs with expositions and defences of his own doctrines, as though supporting and strengthening what he says about Islamic beliefs by showing the weakness of alternatives. His refutation of Christianity occurs at the end of the third major part of the *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, on prophethood. In this part he has set out and defended prophethood against those who deny it in principle, countered the arguments of the notorious sceptics Ibn al-Rāwandī and Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq (whom we encountered earlier), and gone on to defend the role of Muḥammad as last of the messengers of God. Then, in a final word, he turns to Christianity and the claim that Christ was both human and divine (pp. 210-15). He refutes this from a number of angles, doctrinal, scriptural and rational, and finally arrives at the conclusion that this exorbitant Christian doctrine is unsustainable however it is examined.

Elsewhere in the *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* al-Māturīdī makes one brief, but extremely accurate, reference to the doctrine of the Trinity,[13] but that is all he has to say about Christianity apart from this relatively short (and extremely terse and in places obscure) diatribe against the divinity of Christ. If we assume, as we should, that he has in-

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[11] Ed. F. Kholeif, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd, Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Māturīdī al-Samarqandī*, Beirut, 1970; also B. Topaloğlu and M. Aruçi, *Kitâbü't tevhîd*, Ankara, 2003. References are given from the Kholeif edition.

[12] Cf. D. Thomas, 'Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī on the Divinity of Jesus Christ', *Islamochristiana* 23, 1997, [pp. 43-54] pp. 48-9. U. Rudolph, *Al-Māturīdī & die sunnitische Theologie in Samarkand*, Leiden, 1997, pp. 221-35, suggests a seven-part division, though his second part, on the existence of the world, can be regarded as part of the proof of God's existence, and his sixth part, on sin and punishment, can be regarded as part of faith.

[13] Al-Māturīdī, *Tawḥīd*, pp. 119.22-120.3.

tentionally placed it in this position for strategic reasons, it would appear to serve the minor purpose of defending the qur'anic teaching about Christ, and the major purpose of defending the belief that all messengers were no more than human, and thus that there is no logical alternative to the Islamic teaching. Al-Māturīdī has selected this one aspect of Christianity in order to highlight the correctness of a key element in his theological structure.

Some decades after al-Māturīdī, the Ashʿarī theologian al-Bāqillānī wrote his *Kitāb al-tamhīd* as a primer in theology. Again, this contains in one treatise the disparate discussions about religion that first appeared in the previous century, with some attempt to arrange them coherently. And it also combines expositions of theological points from al-Bāqillānī's own school of thought with refutations of rival points, mainly from teachings outside Islam.

The structure of the *Kitāb al-tamhīd* is hardly clearer than that of al-Māturīdī's *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, and it resembles it to some extent. It begins with an epistemological introduction; then a section on God and his characteristics; next a section refuting denials of prophethood and the prophethood of Muḥammad in particular, including a defence of the abrogation of Moses' teaching; then a section on what appear to be erroneous Islamic views about God, and also on the nature of transmitted teachings; and finally a discussion about legitimate leadership in the Muslim community.[14] It appears roughly to follow a similar structure to the *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* in beginning with the sources of knowledge, and continuing with the being of God and his communication with the world through messengers, and then concluding with issues specific to the Muslim community.

Among all the refutations in the work of views opposed to his own *madhhab*, al-Bāqillānī places an examination of Christianity after refutations against dualist views at the end of his second section on God and his characteristics. This examination comprises elaborate attacks against the concept of God as substance and hypostases, and of the doctrine of Uniting. Here, al-Bāqillānī shows in considerable detail the impossibility of God being the multiplicity of divine entities which the doctrine of the Trinity makes it, and of his Word or

[14] This latter section is omitted from the edition of the work by R.J. McCarthy, Beirut, 1957, but is present in the edition of M.M. al-Khuḍayrī and M. ʿA. Abū Rīdah, Cairo, 1947.

any other aspect of his being Uniting with a human and undergoing the same experiences.

From these arguments (many of which derive from Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq), which are all focussed on the nature of divinity, and from the strategic placing of this refutation of Christianity, it appears that al-Bāqillānī intends the exposure of the shortcomings in the doctrines to show the errors that accrue from abandoning the truth of Islamic teachings about God's absolute oneness, and the confused consequences of attempting to establish a rival formulation.

Towards the end of the fourth/tenth century, a third major systematic treatise was composed by the Muʿtazilī master ʿAbd al-Jabbār. This is a vast twenty-part work, much bigger than either of the two before it, and its structure is easier to discern, because it follows the five Muʿtazilī principles of *tawḥīd*, *ʿadl*, and so on.[15] But it shares the same characteristic as al-Māturīdī and al-Bāqillānī's treatises, in combining exposition of positive Islamic teachings with refutation of rival forms. Again, Christianity features among these latter.

The beginning of the *Mughnī* is close in structure to al-Bāqillānī's *Kitāb al-tamhīd*. After an epistemological introduction, ʿAbd al-Jabbār sets out the Muʿtazilī doctrine of God and his characteristics, before moving on the explain his justice in his communication with the created order. At the end of the first major section on God, he includes refutations of dualist religions, and then of Christianity, in a similar way to al-Bāqillānī focussing on the Trinity as a rival to the strict unity of God advocated in Islam, and on the Uniting as an alternative to the strict distinction between God and creatures. Like al-Bāqillānī, he selects these two doctrines in order to show the ridiculousness of any alternative to the Islamic forms and to point up the soundness and rational correctness of these forms by showing the confusion to be found in any departure from them.

While there are definite doctrinal differences between these treatises, coming as they do from the eponymous founder of the Māturīdiyya, the leading Ashʿarī and Muʿtazilī of the fourth/tenth century, there are clear parallels in their structures, and close similarities in the way they treat Christianity. For they each employ

[15] J.R.T.M. Peters, *God's Created Speech: A Study of the Speculative Theology of the Muʿtazilî Qâḍî l-Quḍât Abû l-Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Ǧabbâr bn Aḥmad al-Hamaḏânî*, Leiden, 1976, pp. 27-35, discusses the structure of the work.

aspects of Christian doctrine in order to demonstrate the soundness and correctness of their version of Islamic doctrine, placing it in opposition to the doctrine they wish to enforce and proving through refutation its unviability as an alternative form. All three appear to continue the approach of third/ninth-century theologians in showing less interest in Christianity as such than in aspects that can be brought into an instructive relationship with Islamic doctrines. Given such an approach, it comes as unsurprising to find that there is very little in any of the theologians about the Bible or its status.

They are not entirely silent, though the little they each say is indicative that they do not take the Bible seriously. In what has come down in a rather garbled form, al-Māturīdī argues as part of a discussion about the miracles of Jesus that if Christians ascribe the trustworthiness of these miracles to the fact that they are contained in scripture, and then ascribe the trustworthiness of scripture to the fact that it contains the miracle stories, they are guilty of arguing in a circle.[16] The passing reference to scripture, about which al-Māturīdī uses his habitual term *samʿ*, 'report', as something that requires its authenticity to be guaranteed,[17] suggests that he may have harboured the kind of suspicions about the Gospel that proponents of corruption raised.

Al-Bāqillānī does not venture an opinion about the status of Christian scripture, though at the end of his refutation of their doctrine he gives a series of ingenious interpretations of key verses that show he knew a considerable amount about its contents. Thus, in reply to the claim that according to Matt 1.23 God declared 'The pure virgin is with child and will give birth to a son and his name will be called divine', *wa-yudʿā ismuhu ilāhan*, he argues that God also said to Moses that he would make him a god to Aaron and to Pharaoh in the sense that he would have command and control over them. And he goes on to give an alternative interpretation of the verse:

> God, exalted be he, did not say that he had named him or would name him God, but only said, 'His name will be called divine'. It is possible he may have meant that people would exaggerate his greatness and would call him this, would disregard the limit of createdness, and

[16] Al-Māturīdī, *Tawḥīd*, p. 213.2-5.

[17] Cf. M. Cerić, *Roots of Synthetic Theology in Islām: A Study of the Theology of Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944)*, Kuala Lumpur, 1995, pp. 83-97.

> would lie and become neglectful in this. Where have you ascertained that it is compelling or correct to call anything by this name? They will not be able to find a way out of this.[18]

This admirably removes the suggestion of divinity, while leaving the wording of the verse intact.

Al-Bāqillānī follows this with a few other interpretations of key proof-texts, each of which he shows can be read without ascribing divinity or eternity to Jesus. Thus, it would seem that if he had a personal view about Christian scripture at all, he accepted the integrity of the text and thought Christians were guilty of *taḥrīf bi-al-maʿnā*. He does not actually say this, however, and it may be too much to infer from the little that he does say, because his prevailing concern at this point in the *Kitāb al-tamhīd* is to show that the rational arguments which are employed by Christians to prove that Christ was human and divine have no substance.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār for his part is outspoken about the Gospels, and gives a clear indication that they have no authenticity as revealed scriptures. In a comment reminiscent of al-Jāḥiẓ, he says:

> The [Christians] cannot say: If, according to you, Christ was one of the prophets of God, how can your claims about our teachings being invalid be correct when they are derived from him? For we know their deceitfulness in this, and we rule out the possibility that he delivered anything except what is proved by reason, such as divine unity and not Trinity. And we know that they were mistaken with regard to report and interpretation, because those from whom they received their book were John, Matthew, Luke and Mark. This is what they acknowledge, because when Christ disappeared—they claim that he was killed—and his companions were killed, there remained none of his religion who could provide his book and law for them except these four. They claimed that they composed the Gospels in three languages. Now, it is known that making changes and substitutions, and the suspicion of lying have been levelled at these four. So how can it be right to believe their report about what is and is not acceptable concerning God, exalted by he?[19]

These passing comments about Christian scripture in all three systematic treatises show that these theologians had definite views about it, even though they say little. This very fact that they seem con-

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[18] Al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd* (ed. McCarthy), p. 101 § 179.

[19] ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī, *Al-mughnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa-al-ʿadl*, ed. M.M. al-Khuḍayrī, Cairo, 1965, vol. V, pp. 142-3.

sciously to have chosen not to discuss it underlines the point that their interest in Christianity extended only so far as it might prove useful to their construction of an Islamic systematic theology.

Al-Ǧuwaynī's Shifāʿ al-ghalīl

Considering that Christianity was only of marginal interest to the authors of systematic theologies, and that the Bible was of little concern at all, it is not surprising that few theologians are known to have written works directly devoted to it. But there are a few, among them the enigmatic *Radd al-jamīl li-ilāhiyyat ʿĪsā bi-ṣarīḥ al-Inǧīl*, which is associated with al-Ghazālī and may be by him, and also the brief *Shifāʿ al-ghalīl fī bayān mā waqaʿa fī al-Tawrāt wa-al-Inǧīl min al-tabdīl* composed by al-Ghazālī's teacher, the Imām al-Ḥaramayn Abū al-Maʿālī al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085). This latter work is the composition of one of the leading systematic theologians of Islam, and despite the fact that it is devoted to the Torah and Gospel, it bears the marks of indifference towards things Christian that have been noted above in the treatises from the fourth/tenth century.

Michel Allard, the editor and French translator of the *Shifāʿ*, plausibly suggests that al-Juwaynī is more likely to have composed it during the years he spent in Baghdad, at the time the hotbed of debate between Muslims, Christians and Jews, thus sometime around 450/1058,[20] though there is nothing in the work itself to link it with a particular place or time, and nothing to indicate whether it arose from a particular set of circumstances. Since its contents are characterised by an elegant economy of style and argument, one may suggest that it is a product of al-Juwaynī's mature years. They certainly depend on good access to biblical authorities, probably in written form.

Al-Juwaynī explains the reason for the work at the outset. Quite simply, the Qurʾan affirms in a number of places that the coming of Muḥammad is predicted in the Torah and Gospel, and so the absence of any mention in the versions that are accessible has led Muslim scholars to say that the texts have been altered, *al-qawl bi-al-tabdīl*, and he will demonstrate both the possibility of their alteration

[20] M. Allard, *Textes apologétiques de Ǧuwainī (m. 478/1085)*, Beirut, 1968, p. 10.

and the actual fact of this (pp. 38-41). Thus, the work is a defence of the integrity of the Qur'an and of the Muslim doctrine that earlier messengers foretold the coming of Muḥammad as the last in their line. But it is a defence of a precise and systematic kind, adducing both contextual proof that the texts could have been altered at various times in their history, and textual proof that there are discrepancies within them that prove they have been tampered with.

The Jews and Christians, he says, defend their scriptures in practical terms by arguing that although there are copies distributed throughout the world, and although the two communities vehemently oppose each other in all things, there are no differences between copies of the text no matter where they are or who holds them (pp. 40-5). Thus the fact of uniformity speaks strongly against change. But undeterred, al-Juwaynī will demonstrate that in principle there can have been alteration of the original. He now proceeds to show this, firstly with regard to the Torah.

His first argument here is that the Torah currently in the possession of the Jews is, in fact, not the original revelation to Moses but the text reconstructed by Ezra (ʿAzar) at the time of the restoration of Jerusalem following its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar. It is at this point that alteration to the original could have taken place, either by Ezra himself or by the scribe who copied his reconstruction. And the motive for this would have been the desire to prolong his own preeminence in religion without the one who was foretold in the texts he excised coming to take his place (pp. 44-9). This argument is, of course, circumstantial, though al-Juwaynī was not alone at this time in employing the figure of Ezra to raise the possibility of alteration to the original Torah text. The accusation that Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the original and a new composition was made later was already in circulation in the third/ninth century, and in the time of al-Juwaynī his elder Andalūsī contemporary Ibn Ḥazm was also making it.[21] In the mid-sixth/twelfth century Peter the Venerable is forced to counter this accusation from unnamed Muslims,[22] and at the beginning of the eighth/fourteenth century Muḥammad Ibn

[21] Ibid., pp. 26-7.
[22] J. Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam*, Princeton NJ, 1964, pp. 177-80.

Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī employs it for the same purpose of proving that the text of the Bible is corrupt.[23]

In the *Shifāʿ* it is enough for al-Juwaynī to identify an opportunity for alteration and to suggest a motive. What he says is plausible, and it is therefore sufficient evidence to support his point that alteration was possible. This is, in effect, a theoretical argument, and it is therefore enough for it to be related to fact, consistent and rationally coherent.

He goes on to support this circumstantial point by identifying an instance of what he regards as actual alteration in the Torah. This concerns the ages of the descendants of Adam down to Abraham given in Gen 5.3-32 and 11.10-26, which, he says, differ in the versions held by the Jews and the Christians, and each community blames the other for altering their ages, the Jews accusing the Christians of making the changes to align the ages with the date of Christ's appearance, and the Christians accusing the Jews of changing the ages to upset this alignment (pp. 48-57). Whatever the case, the two versions, which can be identified as the Hebrew and Septuagint texts,[24] disagree and so support a case for alteration. Thus, al-Juwaynī's point is made and he does not need to expand his argument further.

Turning to the Gospels, al-Juwaynī follows the same pattern of argument. On the point of the possibility of alteration he argues that in the period when the revealed teachings were transmitted orally the Christians were casual and inattentive, while the evangelists state openly that they did not set down their Gospels until some years after Christ's ascension, Matthew nine years, John over thirty years, Mark twelve years, and Luke twenty-two (or twenty) years (dates which al-Juwaynī obviously did not find in the texts themselves, but may have seen in Arabic introductions to each Gospel and mistaken as integral to them).[25] So there was a period when Christ's teaching circulated haphazardly and changes may have been made (pp. 56-9). Again, al-Juwaynī's point that there is a possibility of alteration in the text has been made, though he does not offer a reason this

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[23] R. Ebied and D. Thomas, *Muslim-Christian Polemic during the Crusades: The Letter from the People of Cyprus and Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī's Response* (*History of Christian-Muslim Relations* 2), Leiden, 2005, pp. 242-5.

[24] Allard, *Textes apologétiques*, pp. 29-32.

[25] Ibid., p. 28.

time as to why anyone might want to remove mentions of Muḥammad.

Moving to the actual fact of alteration, he makes a number of points. Firstly, the two genealogies given in Matt 1.1-17 and Luke 3.23-38 have internal inconsistencies and also disagree with each other (pp. 58-67). Secondly, the accounts of Peter's denial of Jesus in Mark 14.66-72 and Luke 22.54-60 each have internal inconsistencies and disagree between each other (pp. 86-73). Thirdly, in Matthew's account of the entry into Jerusalem Jesus instructs his disciples to bring an ass and her colt (Matt 21.1-7), while in Mark's account he asks only for a colt (Mark 11.1-3) (pp. 72-5). Fourthly, at the crucifixion Matthew and Mark both say that the robbers crucified with Jesus mocked him, while Luke disagrees and says that one of them believed in him (pp. 74-7). And fifthly, Matthew alone records miraculous events in Jerusalem when Jesus died (Matt 27.51-3), while the other evangelists make no mention of these (pp. 76-81). Each of these instances shows discrepancies between the Gospels, and some of them show inconsistencies within single Gospels. So they provide clear evidence that there must have been alterations to the original text, and al-Juwaynī's point is made. It must therefore be allowed that references to the coming of Muḥammad that were present in the original may have been removed. There is no need to present any further arguments.

The *Shifā'* is a fascinating text, because like Ibn Ḥazm's better known *Fiṣal* it compares parallel texts from the Gospels and highlights the incidental disagreements between them. Thus, it anticipates Christian Gospel criticism by some centuries. But al-Juwaynī's intention, like Ibn Ḥazm's, is simply to demonstrate that the texts of the Bible are unreliable and so the qur'anic account of revelation history can be maintained.

His approach to the problem is strictly theoretical. As we have seen, he identifies ways in which the Torah and Gospel may have been altered, after the destruction of Jerusalem for the motive of power, and after the ascension of Christ through negligence and inattention, and then he shows briefly that there are actual instances of alteration and leaves the matter at that. The central issue of what predictions about Muḥammad they may have contained or where these may have occurred is not discussed, and such commonly identified references as Deuteronomy 18.18, where God tells Moses 'I shall raise up for them a prophet like you, one of their own people,

and I shall put my words into his mouth', and the Paraclete verses in John 14.16f., 15.26 and 16.13f., where Jesus talks of the Spirit of truth who will guide into all truth and will speak only what he hears, are completely left out of the argument.

The omission of these verses, which by al-Juwaynī's time were part of the staple of apologetic towards Christianity, underlines the theoretical character of the *Shifā'* as a work that is not concerned to delve into the details of what the original *Tawrāt* and *Injīl* may have contained—and this is regrettable given al-Juwaynī's evident knowledge of the Synoptic Gospels—but only to conclude upon the possibility of alteration, and so allow that in principle references to the coming of Muḥammad have been removed. It is a work that is too reserved to be part of direct polemical exchange, and too academic to render an adversary speechless. It is written to convince minds that are already made up, rather than those of Jews and Christians that would counter every argument. And it has little interest in the Bible as such for, having made its twin points about the possibility of alteration and the fact of it having happened, it desists, saying nothing about the continuing value of the texts as revealed teachings or their relationship to the Qur'an.[26] It is possible to surmise al-Juwaynī's views on such matters from what he writes, but he has no apparent interest in discussing them. His work is like the systematic treatises we have examined above in using Christianity to make a point within internal Islamic theology and, for all its quotations, its concern with the Bible is subsidiary to its intention to prove the truth of the teachings of Islam.

Conclusion

As they systematised the teachings of the Qur'an and drew out the rational implications of these, Muslim theologians who were active in the third/ninth century and after realised a vast conspectus of teachings about God and the world that fitted together into an analysis of the nature of reality in an impressively coherent way. In

[26] Cf. J.-M. Gaudeul, *Encounters and Clashes: Islam and Christianity in History*, Rome, 1990, vol. I, pp. 93-4, observes, 'Ğuwaynī was not interested in "crushing" his adversary, but simply in saying enough to prove his point, and nothing more.'

this great system of description they saw Islam as the apogee of all that had been before, and they used the teachings of previous faiths within their accounts to show how deviation from the norm of *tawḥīd* and *risāla*, the transcendent oneness of God and his communication through messengers, resulted in confusion and error. Christian doctrine was of great use in this enterprise, whether in showing that belief in Jesus as more than a prophet was unsustainable, as al-Māturīdī demonstrates, or that the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation lead to calamitous mistakes, as al-Bāqillānī and ʿAbd al-Jabbār graphically show.

Within these theological systems Christianity as such was of no relevance, and the Bible was only of secondary significance as an instrument with which to emphasise to Christians their casual error in approaching matters of faith. The Bible in itself was not a part of Islamic theological discussions.

It is this context in which al-Juwaynī's *Shifāʿ al-ghalīl* is to be read and understood. Despite the fact that it is centred on the Bible, it is concerned only to show a few instances of inconsistency and alteration in order to make its point that if this happened once it could have happened repeatedly, and so the absence of the expected mentions of Muḥammad that the Qurʾan states are present in the original can be explained away. This is not an examination of the Bible, much less an inquiry into its status, but a demonstration that Islamic teachings are right through the use of selected biblical texts and favourable scraps of evidence.

Of course, it is not surprising that the Bible features so little in theological works of this kind. For, after all, they are internal Islamic endeavours to set out and interpret the implications of the teachings in the Qurʾan in a systematic manner for Muslims themselves. While these works draw upon refutations of Christianity and other non-Islamic faiths, they are in themselves more than refutations, and so they put to use knowledge about these faiths in order to build their own theological structure. In such circumstances it is quite understandable how the Bible is of little importance, and how when a theologian such as al-Juwaynī appears to write about the Bible he is actually indifferent towards it except insofar as it assists him in establishing and supporting the basic dogma of Islam.

THE QUR'ANIC SARAH AS PROTOTYPE OF MARY

GABRIEL SAID REYNOLDS

In the autumn of 2000 a Greek Orthodox friend of mine in Beirut, Lebanon, showed me an image of his favorite icon: a fifteenth century Russian depiction of the visitation, described in Genesis 18, of three men to Abraham and Sarah.[1] The beauty of the icon, he explained, is that the artist used this scene to represent the Holy Trinity. The angel to the right, wearing a sky blue garment, is the Holy Spirit. The angel in the middle, in an earth-toned garment, is the Son, and the angel to the left, wearing a garment the color of which changes with the light, is the Father.

This Trinitarian interpretation of Genesis 18 seems to be encouraged by the very opening of the biblical account: 'Yahweh appeared to him at the Oak of Mamre while he was sitting by the entrance of the tent during the hottest part of the day. He looked up, and there he saw three men standing near him' (Gen 18.1-2, New Jerusalem Bible). Accordingly, this interpretation is an ancient one. Saint Augustine (*City of God*, 29) defends it with the observation that while *three* men are said to visit Abraham and Sarah, the voice that speaks from their midst in verse 13 is that of the Lord.[2] The resonance of this mysterious narrative can even be heard in Luke's Gospel, in the famous depiction of Christ on the road to Emmaus (ch. 24). Here too a heavenly figure, appearing in human form, is received at a meal.[3]

Contemporary scholars, on the other hand, see the anthropomorphic theme of Genesis 18 as a reflection of the immanent God of the Pentateuch's Yahwist source. Meanwhile, the story itself is an etiology. It accounts for the name of Isaac, Hebrew *yiẓḥāq*, with the report that Sarah laughed, *tiẓḥāq*, in verse 12.[4]

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[1] Andrei Rublev's *The Trinity* in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

[2] On patristic exegesis of Gen 18 cf. W. Miller, *Mysterious Encounters at Mamre and Jabbok*, Chico CA, 1984, ch. 2.

[3] Cf. also Heb 13.2.

[4] Cf. Gen 17.17. The name Isaac is more likely an abbreviation of *yiẓḥāq-'ēl*, God

Nevertheless, to both Christians and Jews this account has a basic didactic purpose. To Christians it teaches the mysterious (in the best sense of the word) triune nature of God. To Jews it teaches the inscrutable divine election of Abraham and Sarah, elect by God's mercy, not by merit. Sarah's lie in verse 15 makes this point in unmistakable fashion.

In several passages the Qur'an, too, refers to messengers, or guests, who visited Abraham and delivered news of Isaac's birth. The tone of these passages, however, is more homily than narrative. The Qur'an, it seems, is not providing an alternative version of Genesis 18, but rather a commentary on it. In the present chapter I will argue that this commentary is influenced by a Christian reading of Genesis 18, not the Trinitarian reading mentioned above, but rather a typological reading that has Sarah as the prototype of Mary.

Muslim commentators, however, read the Qur'an as both homily *and* narrative, although with stories such as the present one it is quite sparing with details. In fact, the Qur'an seems to assume that the audience already knows the details of the story, such as the reason for Abraham's wife's laughter. Yet the medieval Muslim commentators either no longer knew those details, or, if they did, they knew them from non-Muslim sources whose reliability was ever-suspect. They therefore relied instead on a close and speculative reading of the Qur'an to fill in the missing details. This would lead them to a very different explanation of Abraham's wife's laughter.

The qur'anic account

The reference to that laughter occurs in Qur'an chapter 11 (*Sūrat Hūd*) vv. 69-72, where the Qur'ān relates:

> 69. Our messengers came to Abraham with good news. They said, 'Peace'. He said, 'Peace,' and hastened to bring them a roasted (*ḥanīdh*) calf.[5] 70. When he saw that their hands did not touch it, he became

laughs; cf J. Barton and J. Muddiman, eds, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, Oxford, 2001, p. 52.

[5] *Ḥanīdh* is an enigmatic term that confuses the commentators. The reading of the *rasm* might be reconsidered, as many possible forms could be applied to the *scriptio defectiva*.

> suspicious and fearful of them. They said, 'Do not fear. We have been sent to the people of Lot.'

The following verse is more difficult to translate. It begins: *imra'atuhu qā'imatun*, 'His wife was standing', *fa-ḍaḥikat*, 'then (or 'so') she laughed'.[6] Thereafter another '*fa*' phrase appears: *fa-bashsharnāhā bi-isḥāqa wa-min warā' isḥāqa yaʿqūb*. The first person plural of the Qur'an returns here. In verse 70, 'they' said. In verse 71 'We' gave her the good news. This shift is not unlike the appearance of the divine voice in Genesis 18.13 from the midst of the three angels.[7]

Yet the translation of verse 71 causes consternation among Muslim commentators for another reason, namely, because Abraham's wife laughs *before* she hears the annunciation of a son. Among modern translators Yūsuf 'Alī has: 'She laughed: But we gave her glad tidings of Isaac.' Shākir translates: 'She laughed, then We gave her the good news of Isḥāq.' On the other hand, Muḥammad Marmaduke Pickthall, the English convert and son of an Anglican priest has: 'And his wife, standing by, laughed *when* We gave her good tidings (of the birth) of Isaac.'

And finally, verse 72: 'She said, "Woe is me, am I to give birth when I am old and my master is aged. This is a remarkable thing."'

The story of Abraham's visitors is repeated in chapter 51 (*Sūrat al-Dhāriyyāt*), vv. 24-34, but here the visitors are referred to as *qawm munkarūn* (v. 25), perhaps an 'unknown' or 'mysterious' group. This has something in common with 11.70, where it is related that Abraham *nakirahum*, 'became suspicious of them', when they did not touch the food. It seems likely that the non-qur'anic angels Munkar and Nakīr receive their names, and their vocation as angels of punishment, from these references.

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[6] The reading attributed to Ibn Masʿūd adds *wa-huwa jālisun* after mentioning that she was standing. As in the biblical account, apparently, the woman is doing all the work; cf. A. Jeffery, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ān*, Leiden, 1937, p. 47.

[7] Note that v. 74 relates, 'When his wonderment passed and the good news reached him, Abraham debated with us over the people of Lot.' This too is not unlike the turn of events in Genesis: 'And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD' (18.22). Gen 18.22 leads into the famous scene of Abraham's plea-bargaining for Sodom. In Q 11.76, on the other hand, the divine voice suddenly addresses Abraham directly, informing him that the debate will be fruitless: 'O Abraham turn away from this….A punishment that cannot be reversed will come upon them.'

More to the point, in 51.28 there is an important difference from *Sūrat Hūd*, for here when the angels seek to reassure a fearful Abraham, they do not do so, as in 11.70, by telling him that their mission is against the people of Lot. Instead, they reassure him by delivering the good news of a son. At this (v. 29), Abraham's wife emerges screeching (*fī ṣarratin*), hits her face (*ṣakkat wajhahā*)[8] and proclaims, '*ajūzun ʿaqīmun*, 'old and sterile!' That is, how, could they have a child at their age?[9]

Thus the passage in *Sūrat al-Dhāriyyāt*, even if it does not refer to laughter, nevertheless provides a guide for reading the passage in *Sūrat Hūd*. It brings to light the primary role of Abraham's wife in the qurʾanic pericope, which is not unlike her role in the story of Genesis 18: to express shock at the idea that she and her husband would have a child in their old age. The *mufassirūn*, however, do not see it this way.

Tafsīr

On the question of the laughter of Abraham's wife, the author of the *tafsīr* attributed to Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/768) offers only one explanation (without citing *isnād*s or *ḥadīth*s): She laughed 'at Abraham's fear and terror of three individuals'.[10] In other words, she did not realize that the messengers mentioned in Q 11.69 were angels. Abraham's fearful demeanor was therefore curious. For al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) and other *mufassirūn*, such as Abū Isḥāq al-Thaʿlabī (d. 427/1036) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209),[11] the matter is not so clear. Al-Ṭabarī, according to his practice of citing what Norman Calder calls 'polyvalent readings',[12]

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[8] According to al-Ṭabarī, 'She hit her forehead in amazement'; *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, ed. Muḥammad Bayḍūn, 12 vols, Beirut, 420/1999, vol. XI, p. 464.

[9] Cf. also the references to this anecdote in Q 15.51-8; 29.30.

[10] Muqātil Ibn Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, ed. ʿAbdallāh Maḥmūd al-Shiḥāta, 4 vols, Cairo, n.d., vol. II, p. 290. Cf. the views of L. Ammann, *Vorbild und Vernunft. Die Regelung von Lachen und Scherzen im mittelalterlichen Islam*, Hildesheim, 1993, pp. 19ff.; 'Laughter', *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. J. McAuliffe, 5 vols, Leiden, 2001-6, vol. III, p. 148.

[11] See al-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, ed. Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, Beirut, 1425/2004, pp. 74-6; al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, ed. Muḥammad Bayḍūn, Beirut, 1421/2000, vol. XVIII, pp. 21-2.

[12] See N. Calder, 'Tafsir from Tabari to Ibn Kathir: problems in the description

cites six different, and incompatible, views.[13]

According to the first view, Abraham's wife laughed at the fact that the guests would not eat despite the fact that she and Abraham were serving them and honoring them. She laughed out of disbelief. According to the second view, she laughed because 'the people of Lot were heedless and the messengers of God had come to destroy them.' She laughed out of satisfaction. According to the third view: 'When the angels came she thought that they wanted to do that which the people of Lot do.' She laughed when she realized that they had not come to sodomize them. She laughed out of relief. According to the fourth view, 'She laughed because of the fear she saw in Abraham.' This, apparently, is the tradition that Muqātil relates. Why be afraid of three mere mortals? She laughed out of amusement or curiosity.

According to the fifth view: 'She laughed when she received the good news about Isaac, amazed that she would have a child in her and her husband's old age.' This is the conclusion indicated both by the parallel passage of Q 51 and the connection of this account to Genesis 18. Al-Ṭabarī nevertheless opposes this view, since, as mentioned above, the report of laughter comes *before* the report of the annunciation. Some scholars, al-Ṭabarī notes, proposed solving this problem with the device of *ta'khīr al-muqaddam*. That is, the laughter really should be understood after the good news. Yet al-Ṭabarī is suspicious of this explanation, which is evidently a *ḥīla*, a convenient explanation designed to justify a preconceived conclusion. Of course, just because a *ḥīla* is a *ḥīla* does not mean it is wrong.

Excursus: the sixth view

Finally, according to a sixth view Abraham's wife did not laugh at all, since *ḍaḥikat* here actually means *ḥāḍat*, she menstruated. With this v. 71 suddenly has an appealing logic to it: His wife, waiting by, had her *menses* (despite her advanced age) and received the good news of Isaac. But is the logic too appealing? This alternate meaning

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of a genre, illustrated with reference to the story of Abraham', in G.R. Hawting and A.A. Shareef, eds, *Approaches to the Qur'an*, London, 1993, pp. 101-40.

[13] Geiger describes the speculations of the *mufassirūn* on this matter as 'mannigfaltigsten abgeschmackten Vermuthungen'; A. Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed aus den Judenthume aufgenommen*, 2nd edn, Leiden, 1902, p. 128.

for *ḍaḥika* seems to be *e re nata*, created for the sake of Q 11.71. In fact, al-Ṭabarī relates that while the grammarians of Baṣra recognize this definition for *ḍaḥika*, those of Kūfa have never heard of it.

On the other hand, Suzanne Stetkevych argues on the basis of a reference in a *jāhilī* poem (attributed to Ta'abbaṭa Sharran) found in the *Ḥamāsa*, that this secondary meaning for *ḍaḥikat* is authentic. In this reference the poet, while announcing his intention to avenge his uncle's blood, refers to a hyena laughing (*taḍḥaku al-ḍabʿū*).[14] The Muslim commentators on the *Ḥamāsa*, including al-Marzūqī (d. 421/1030) and al-Tibrīzī (d. 502/1109), raise but reject the possibility that the poet is referring to menstruation. Stetkevych disagrees: 'The connection between menstruation and unavenged blood or defeat on the battlefield is too well established to leave any doubt that there is a pun at work here.'[15] She then refers to our qur'anic pericope and argues that the same applies: 'Any modern reading must insist on the intentionality of the *double entendre*'.[16]

I do not follow entirely what she means by a 'modern reading' here. What is at issue when the concern is intentionality, it seems to me, is the ancient reading. In this regard, the evidence in the Muslim commentaries suggests that the gloss of *ḍaḥikat* with *ḥāḍat* only emerged from speculation on Q 11.71. Thereafter Muslim commentators could consider applying it to their interpretation of *jāhilī* poetry. In other words, if the idea that *ḍaḥikat* could mean 'she menstruated' had not yet arisen at the time the Qur'an was written, the author could not have intended a *double entendre*.

Meanwhile, the very idea that Abraham's wife received her *menses* during this incident may have its origin in the Talmud. Heinrich Speyer,[17] following Abraham Geiger,[18] points to a tradition in the Babylonian Talmudic book *Bābā mezi'a* (86b-87a) that contains this

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[14] Meanwhile, Reuven Firestone notes a tradition cited by al-Thaʿlabī in his *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* on the authority of Mujāhid and 'Ikrima that *ḍaḥikat* means 'she menstruated' since, according to the Arabs, rabbits laugh when they menstruate. See R. Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands*, Albany NY, 1990, p. 58; al-Thaʿlabī, pp. 74-6.

[15] Cf. S.P. Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak*, Ithaca NY, 1993, p. 66. See p. 60 for the poetic verse (cited from al-Tibrīzī's version of the *Ḥamāsa*).

[16] Ibid., p. 67.

[17] H. Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran*, Hildesheim, 1988, pp. 148-50.

[18] Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed*, pp. 127ff. Cf. also D. Sidersky, *Les légendes musulmanes dans le Coran et dans les vies des prophètes*, 2nd edn, Paris, 1933, p. 46.

detail.[19] In the Talmudic discussion this report serves as a device to explain why Abraham, in verse 5, offers to bring bread to his guests but then, in verse 8, lays out butter, milk and a calf before them. Sarah, it is concluded, defiled the bread with the appearance of her *menses*.[20]

In the end al-Ṭabarī wisely concludes that *ḍaḥikat* does not mean 'she menstruated' but 'she laughed'. She laughed, he concludes, due to the satisfaction of knowing that Lot's people would be destroyed (view number two above). Happily, he reveals the reason behind his conclusion, remarking, 'We only said that this statement is more correct because, as He reports, the end of [the messenger's] statement to Abraham is: "Do not fear. We have been sent to the people of Lot." If that is so, then the only reason to laugh and be amazed…is the affair of Lot's people.'

In other words, al-Ṭabarī's method here is formed by the immediate sequence of the qur'anic text, something which John Burton refers to as atomism.[21] He is not informed by the parallel rendition of this narrative in chapter 51, where the angelic reassurance, 'Do not be afraid', has nothing to do with Lot, but rather with the good news of a son. Nor is he informed by a tradition outside the Qur'an, from an oral tradition of interpretation preserved from the period of the Qur'an's origin. Instead, his conclusion is based on a personal encounter with the immediate text and participation in a larger scholarly dialogue about that text, a method not unlike *haggadic midrash*.[22]

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[19] It appears in the discussion of a *Mishna* (ch. 7) on providing food for hired labor in accordance with local custom. Here the three messengers who visit Abraham are identified as Michael (who comes with the message for Sarah, Abraham having already received the news), Gabriel (who comes to heal Abraham after his circumcision) and Raphael (who comes to destroy Sodom); cf. L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, trans. H. Szold, 6 vols, Philadelphia PA, 1988, vol. I, pp. 240ff., vol. V, pp. 234ff.

[20] Cf. *Genesis Rabbah*, 48.14.

[21] J. Burton, 'Law and exegesis: the penalty for adultery in Islam', in Hawting and Shareef, *Approaches to the Qur'an*, [pp. 269-84] p. 280.

[22] Al-Thaʿlabī also cites six views, omitting the view that Sarah was afraid that the angels might do that which the people of Lot do (al-Ṭabarī's third view) and adding a tradition that the angel Gabriel, who was one of the messengers, gave Sarah a sign that such a thing could come to pass by twisting between his fingers a dry stick, from which sprouted a green leaf; cf. Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands*, pp. 57-8; al-Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, pp. 74-6. Al-Rāzī presents the longest list of proposed interpretations of *ḍaḥikat*. He relates that those who believe that this word refers to laughter account for it on the basis of:

The qur'anic allusions

Yet the text itself, with its allusive style, demands that the reader be familiar with outside sources. Three allusions are especially prominent.

The first allusion is to the three visitors as 'messengers', *rusul*, behind which may lie Greek ἄγγελος. In the biblical account the visitors are simply described as men. Yet in both Jewish and Christian exegesis they are commonly identified with angels. This identification is reflected in the term *rusul* of Q 11.69 (*n.b.* Q 22.75, which explains that God chooses *rusul* from among both angels and men). Meanwhile, in the other two qur'anic references to this narrative the visitors are called *ḍayf* (Q 15.51, 51.24), guests, a term that likewise alludes to the developed Jewish and Christian exegesis of this narrative.

The second allusion is to the refusal of Abraham's guests to eat. The Qur'an (11.70) describes how Abraham became suspicious of the messengers when he saw that their hands did not reach for the calf. The reason for his suspicion appears to be the messengers' rejection of his hospitality, and indeed that is the opinion of most Muslim exegetes. Yet there is reason to think that the Qur'an is alluding to another matter entirely, for the question of the heavenly realm and eating is a significant biblical topos.

In Judges 13 the Angel of Yahweh appears to Manoah to foretell the birth of Samson. When Manoah insists, 'Allow us to detain you

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1. The end of Abraham's fear;
2. The arrival of a son for whom they had been asking;
3. Happiness that the wicked people of Lot would die;
4. The words of the angel Gabriel, who said that it was right for God to take someone like Abraham as a *khalīl*;
5. The coincidence that at the very moment Abraham's wife was telling her husband that Lot's people should be punished the angel announced that they would be punished;
6. The fulfillment of Abraham's request of a miracle from the visitors in order to verify that they were angels. The visitors prayed and the roasted lamb jumped;
7. The annunciation of a son, either due to amazement since Abraham's wife was ninety-something years old and Abraham was one hundred years old or due to pleasure (cf. Gen 17.17). Some who support this view believe *ḍaḥikat* should be understood earlier than its place in the text (*ta'khīr al-muqaddam*);
8. Amazement at Abraham's fear of three individuals.

As for those who say that *ḍaḥikat* does not mean laughter, they say it means *ḥāḍat*, 'she had her *menses*'; cf. al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, vol. XVIII, pp. 21-2.

while we prepare a kid for you' (v. 15), the angel replies, 'Even if you did detain me, I should not eat your food' (v. 16). In the Book of Tobit, when the angel Raphael finally reveals his identity after his long journey to Iran with Tobias, he comments, 'You thought you saw me eating, but that was appearance and no more' (12.19).

Accordingly, the author of the midrashic work *Genesis Rabbah* has Abraham's visitors announce: 'As for us, we do not eat or drink' (48.11), a statement that seems to contradict Gen 18.8.[23] This apparent contradiction is addressed in the Talmudic passage referred to above (*Bābā mezi'a* 86b), which concludes that the angels who visited Abraham, 'only seemed to eat and drink', (as Raphael only appeared to eat during his journey with Tobias).[24] This point is expressed again later in *Genesis Rabbah* (48.14), where the commentator concludes that Moses fasted on Mt Sinai in deference to the principle of following a local custom. Above, in the heavenly realm, 'There is no eating'.[25]

This topos is not absent from the New Testament, either. In the account of the Road to Emmaus in Luke 24, the two men assume Jesus is only a man until the moment he breaks bread. He does not eat it, but hands it to them (Luke 24.30). At this they recognize him, as he immediately vanishes from their sight (v. 31). Thereafter Jesus appears to the apostles who, on the contrary, mistake him for a ghost (v. 37). To prove that he is truly flesh and bones (v. 39), that is, resurrected in the body, he asks 'Have you anything here to eat?' (v. 41). They hand him a piece of fish, which he eats 'before their eyes' (v. 43).

Thus, the allusion to the refusal of the messengers to eat in Q 11.70 is about much more than rejected hospitality. It is an allusion

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[23] Cf. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, vol. V, p. 236; Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, p. 149.

[24] A note in a second Talmudic passage (*Qiddūshīn* 52) adds that the messengers appeared to be nothing other than Arabs, i.e., Bedouins. See Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed*, p. 127.

[25] Josephus (*Antiquitates*, 1:11:2) and Philo (*De Abrahamo*, para. 118) conclude that the angels only appeared to be eating. Cf. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, vol. V, p. 236; Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, p. 149. Justin expresses the same view in his dialogue with Trypho (ch. 57). On the other hand, Speyer mentions the view expressed in *Numbers Rabbah* (10, 19) that the angels did eat in order to comply with local custom. Tertullian, writing against Marcion, argues that the angels indeed took on a carnal form and could eat, thus foreshadowing the Incarnation. Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.*, 3, 9.

that lets its reader know that these *rusul* are no normal *rusul*. Indeed, it expresses the ambiguous nature of these angels from the midst of whom God speaks. The fear of Abraham mentioned in the Qurʾan is thus perhaps best understood in light of Manoah's reaction to the visit of the angel of Yahweh. He cries out to his wife, 'We are certain to die, because we have seen God' (Judges 13.22).[26]

The third allusion: Sarah the prototype of Mary

The third allusion in the qurʾanic pericope is the main concern of this paper: the laughter of Abraham's wife. The full meaning of this laughter, I propose, is to be found in the Christian understanding of the miraculous conception of Isaac.[27] In this regard it is important to note that the qurʾanic name for Isaac, *isḥāq*, corresponds to Syriac *isḥāq*,[28] not to Hebrew *yizḥāq*. The significance of this correspondence transcends the basic question of origin. For the root of the name *isḥāq* does *not* match the verbal root for laughter in

[26] Cf. Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, p. 149.

[27] In 11.72 the Qurʾan has Abraham's wife refer to her husband as *baʿlī*, a term that appears elsewhere in the Qurʾan with this meaning (2.228 in the plural; 4.128; 24.31). Jeffery traces the *baʿl* of Q 37.125, where it refers to the Canaanite God, to Syriac *bʿel* (see Payne-Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, vol. I, Oxford, 1879, vol. II, 1901, p. 51), although he also mentions Horowitz's opinion (*Koranische Untersuchungen*, Berlin, 1926, p. 101) that it has an Ethiopic provenance. See A. Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qurʾān*, Baroda, 1938, p. 81. On the etymology and use of the root b.ʿ.l. in Semitic languages see W. Leslau, *A Comparative Dictionary of Geʿez*, Wiesbaden, 1987, p. 84.

In the Hebrew Bible (Gen 18.12) Sarah describes Abraham as *adōnī*; in the Septuagint it is κύριός; in the Aramaic Targum the term *rabbōnī* appears, while in the Syriac Peshiṭṭā it is *marr*. Unfortunately, this chapter is not extant in the Old Testament of Christian Palestinian Aramaic, the dialect from which Jeffery so often traces the foreign vocabulary of the Qurʾan. Only about ten percent of the early Christian Palestinian Aramaic Old Testament has survived, the first piece of which is not Gen 18, but Gen 19 (vv. 1-5). See C. Müller-Kessler and M. Sokoloff, eds, *The Christian Palestinian Aramaic Old Testament and Apocrypha Version from the Early Period*, Groningen, 1997, p. 3.

[28] 'Sogar die arabische Form seines Names "Ishak" (اسحاق) entspricht mehr der griechischen oder syrischen als der hebräischen Benennung; vielleicht auch, dass bei den arabischen Juden "Ishak" als Name gebräuchlich war und man also der Umgangssprache diese Form entlehnte. Das biblische Etymon des Namens aber ist den Arabern durchaus unbekannnt' (M. Grünbaum, *Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sagenkunde*, Leiden, 1893, p. 143). See Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary*, p. 60; J. Horowitz, 'Jewish proper names and derivatives in the Koran', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 2, 1925, [pp. 144-277] p. 155.

either Arabic (*ḍaḥika*) or Syriac (*ġḥak*). Therefore, the basic etiological purpose of this narrative for Jews, that Isaac (Hebr. *yiẓḥaq*) was named due to Sarah's laughter (*tiẓḥaq*) is out of the question. Other interpretations of this laughter might then emerge.

Above all, Christians interpreted the miraculous conception of Isaac as a foreshadowing of the miraculous conception of Christ. The opening of Sarah's womb long past childbearing age anticipates the opening of the womb of Mary, who had not known man. In fact, the angelic Annunciation to Mary in Luke 1 is shaped generally by Old Testament tropes of angelic visitations and miraculous conceptions (e.g. of Samson and Samuel) but particularly by the narrative of Sarah in Genesis 18. There Sarah responds to the angels' message, thinking, 'Now that I am past the age of childbearing and my husband is an old man, is pleasure to come my way again?' (v. 12). In Luke 1.34, Mary responds to the angel's message, wondering, 'But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man.' In Genesis 18 (v. 14) the Lord confirms the message, reminding Sarah, 'Nothing is impossible for the Lord.' In Luke 1.37, the angel likewise announces to Mary, 'Nothing is impossible for God.' Finally, whereas Sarah laughs in amazement at the angelic proclamation, Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth, whose son John leaps in her womb at the approach of Mary with Jesus in her womb, and to whom she confesses her joy in the song known as the Magnificat (Luke 1.46-55).[29]

Mar Ephrem, in his *Hymn on Abraham and Isaac* (§27), directly compares the laughter of Sarah to the leap of John the Baptist: 'And as John by leaping, so Sarah by laughing revealed the joy.'[30] They were sharing in the same joy, he adds, since Sarah had a mystical foreknowledge of Christ: (§26) 'Sarah did not laugh because of Isaac, but because of the One who is born from Mary.'

The parallels between the annunciation of Isaac's and Jesus' birth are not absent from the Qur'an. While in Q 11.71 the divine voice relates *bashsharnāhā bi-isḥāq*, '*We* gave her the good news of Isaac', in 3.45 the *angels* say to Mary, *inna Allāha yubashshiruki bi-kalamatin minhu*,

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[29] Note that Philo, in *De Mutatione Nominum* (166), describes Sarah's laughter as an act of deep spiritual joy; cf. Miller, *Mysterious Encounters*, p. 59.

[30] See *S. Ephraem Syri Opera, Tomus Primus*, ed. S.J. Mercati, Rome, 1915, p. 49. Regarding the authenticity of this text extant only in Greek, Mercati (pp. 5-6) notes that both the content and style agree with the known Syriac works of Ephrem.

'God gives you good news of a Word from him.' The fact that the Qurʾan refers here to angels in the plural is peculiar, in light of the fact that two verses later (3.47) only one angel speaks to Mary. This peculiarity, I suggest, reflects the intimate relationship of this passage with that on the annunciation to Abraham's wife, where a group of angels appear to deliver the message. This relationship is also seen in the response of the chosen women. In 3.47 Mary responds, 'O My Lord, am I to have a child when no man has touched me?' In Q 11.71 Abraham's wife proclaims, 'Woe is me. Shall I give birth in my old age, when my Lord is aged? This is an amazing thing.'

Of course, we might now confidently refer to Abraham's wife as Sarah, but it is not insignificant that she remains unnamed in the Qurʾan. The only woman named in the Qurʾan is Mary, who with her son is protected from Satan (3.36-7) and is a sign for the universe (21.91). To the Qurʾan she is the culmination of all women: 'The angels said, "O Mary, God has elected you and purified you. He has elected you over the women of the worlds"' (3.42). Thus the qurʾanic annunciation to Sarah must point to the annunciation to Mary.

The qurʾanic Sarah, therefore, laughs out of amazement at the promised miracles, both of them. If Mary has no such reaction in the Qurʾan, it is perhaps because, as in the Bible, she is a more graceful version of her prototype, who in the Bible lies after receiving the angelic message (Genesis 18.15) and in the Qurʾan screeches and hits her face (51.29), or proclaims 'Woe is me' (11.72).

Conclusion: on the confusion of the mufassirūn

Finally, it is worth revisiting the confusion of the *mufassirūn* on this point. For this confusion reveals their method. Al-Ṭabarī, as I have described earlier, comes to his conclusion—that Abraham's wife laughed with satisfaction, knowing the evil people of Lot would get their just desserts—due to word order, the word order of the one specific pericope on his mind at the time. This method leads al-Ṭabarī to interpret the laughter of Abraham's wife in a fashion almost perfectly contrary to Ephrem. In his *Commentary on Genesis* (§16), Ephrem relates:

> It was not revealed to Sarah that they were going to Sodom lest, on the same day that they had given her joy in the promise that a son

> was to be hers, she be grieving over her brother [Lot] on account of that sentence of wrath decreed on Sodom and the nearby villages. They hid this from Sarah lest she never cease weeping.[31]

While al-Ṭabarī concludes that Abraham's wife laughed at the news of the destruction of Lot's people, Ephrem argues that this had to be kept from her, lest she cry.

Al-Ṭabarī, of course, is correct that the qur'anic text mentions Abraham's wife's laughter *before* the good news of a son. And he certainly cannot be blamed for rejecting the *ḥīla* that the Qur'an has reversed the order of events. Nevertheless, this is just what the Qur'an has done.

In order to see why, it is important to note that the verse in which the laughter is mentioned ends with the name Jacob, *Ya'qūb*. The angels give good news to Sarah of a son *and* a grandson. This is extraordinary, in light of the fact that in the other two qur'anic versions of this narrative the messengers refer only to the birth of a single boy (*ghulām*; Q 15.53; 51.28). In Genesis 18, as well, Abraham's guests mention only the birth of Isaac.[32] In Qur'an 11, however, the birth of Isaac's son Jacob, *Ya'qūb*, is foretold along with that of his father. The reason for this is not theological, but phonological: Jacob's name has a *wāw* in the penultimate position.[33] This allows the Qur'an to continue the rhyme scheme, or *fāṣila*, of *yā'* or *wāw* in the penultimate position of the final word in each verse. The end of the verses in this pericope then read: *bi-'ijlin ḥanīdh* (69); *qawmi Lūṭ* (70); *warā' isḥāqa ya'qūb* (71); *la-shay'un 'ajīb* (72); *ḥamīdun majīd* (73).

Thus Ya'qūb had to be added due to the *fāṣila*, since Isḥāq has an alif, and not a *yā'* or a *wāw*, in the penultimate position. What is more, the beginning of the verse—*wa-imra'atuhu qā'imatun fa-ḍaḥikat*—that is, the mention of Sarah's laughter—also does not contain the right *fāṣila* formula. It therefore had to be put at the beginning of the verse, before the mention of the good news of a son.

In this case, then, there is a sharp disjunction between Qur'an and *tafsīr*. The Qur'an is fully conversant with a Judaeo-Christian

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[31] See *St Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose Works*, trans. E. Mathews and J. Amar (*The Fathers of the Church* 91), Washington DC, 1994, p. 159.

[32] In fact, as far as I can tell, all other biblical and qur'anic birth annunciation narratives concern only the birth of the son, never the grandson.

[33] I am indebted to Prof. Vahid Behmardi of the Lebanese American University for this insight.

narrative tradition. The *mufassirūn*, on the other hand, use the Qurʾan to make a new beginning. John Wansbrough comments, 'The underlying motive (*Geistesbeschäftigung*) of Islamic salvation history, of "election" history, might be formulated not as "eschatology" but as "protology": a reaffirmation and restoration of original purity.'[34] In *tafāsīr* on passages such as the laughter of Sarah, there is indeed a sort of protology, an attempt at historical reconstruction based on references in the text itself. Wansbrough, of course, takes the idea of protology further, applying it to the reconstruction of Islamic origins, and Muḥammad's life in particular, inasmuch as references in the qur'ānic text led to the construction of the *sīra*. The idea of interpreting the Qurʾan with the *sīra* is then perfectly circular.

In this modest contribution there is nothing so dramatic. I do hope, however, that this chapter might serve as a case study for the importance of seeing the larger sectarian milieu of the Qurʾan. For in this case, at least, to limit ourselves to Islamic reports and the Arabic language, that is, to follow the precedent of medieval exegesis, is to limit our appreciation of the Qurʾan.

[34] J. Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History*, Oxford, 1978, p. 147.

EARLY MUSLIM ACCUSATIONS OF *TAḤRĪF*: MUQĀTIL IBN SULAYMĀN'S COMMENTARY ON KEY QUR'ANIC VERSES

GORDON NICKEL

There are many different ways to tamper. At least, this is the message of the earliest Muslim commentaries on the Qur'an. When these commentaries explained the verses which are most frequently used to support the Islamic doctrine of the corruption of previous scriptures, they portrayed a lively variety of actions by the People of the Book in response to the claims of Islam. Only rarely did these actions include falsification of the scriptures in their possession.

By contrast, later Muslim polemicists made the case that the tampering referred to in the Qur'an is mainly of one kind—the corruption or deliberate falsification of texts. This is also reflected in some of the Western scholarly treatments of the materials related to this theme in the Qur'an. And indeed, this is what is heard most often in Muslim-Christian conversation today.

Muslim polemicists and scholars of Islam alike commonly refer to a series of verses in the Qur'an when they discuss the doctrine of *taḥrīf*. A total of 25 verses from the Qur'an are associated with the accusation. These may be called the 'tampering' verses because tampering is an elastic term which can include a wide variety of actions. As the evidence below will show, *taḥrīf* for the early commentators did not mean what it came to mean.

An exploration of the exegesis of the tampering verses in the early commentaries offers hints about the development of the Islamic doctrine of corruption. The focus of early Muslim accusations of *taḥrīf* was not corruption or falsification of the text. Rather, the commentators were more concerned about the response of non-Muslims—primarily the Jews of Madīna—to the Muslim claims that Muḥammad is a prophet and that the recitations he is speaking are from Allah.

The commentary of Muqātil ibn Sulaymān is particularly rich for this investigation. Muqātil died in 150/767 and his commentary on the Qur'an is the oldest complete edited commentary in good

condition.[1] It has only become widely available to scholars in the last few decades. Muqātil provides many interesting details in his exegesis of all of the tampering verses. The following description and analysis, however, will focus on what Muqātil understands to be the tampering action signified by the relevant verb.

Exegesis of the verses of alteration

Scholarly lists of tampering verses most frequently indicate four verses containing the verb *ḥarrafa*. Muslim polemic is similar. Abdullah Saeed writes, 'Of the terms related to "distortion" and "corruption" of the text used in the Qur'an, the popular Muslim view takes the derivatives of the term *taḥrīf* as the basis of its insistence on the deliberate falsification of *Tawrāt* and *Injīl* by Jews and Christians, respectively.'[2] For this reason, the *ḥarrafa* verses are examined in the greatest detail, along with three verses containing a second verb of alteration, *baddala*.

1. *Adding words to a verbal report*

> 'Are you then so eager that they should believe you, seeing there is a party of them that heard the word of Allah, then tampered with (*yuḥarrifūna*) it, and that after they had understood it, knowingly?' (*Baqara* 75)

Muqātil explains the meaning of this verse by telling a story about the children of Israel from the ancient past.[3] He begins the story with his characteristic introduction, 'This is about how…' (*wa-dhālika an*). The seventy leaders whom Moses appointed ask to hear the voice of Allah. Allah requires them to purify themselves ritually, and they comply. They proceed with Moses to the mountain, then prostrate themselves when they hear the voice of Allah. Allah says,

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[1] R. Forster, *Methoden mittelalterlicher arabischer Qur'anexegese am Beispiel von Q 53, 1-18*, Berlin, 2001, p. 11.

[2] 'The charge of distortion of Jewish and Christian scriptures', *The Muslim World* 92, 2002, [pp. 419-36] p. 420.

[3] *Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaymān*, ed. ʿAbdallāh Maḥmūd Shiḥāta, Beirut, 2002, vol. I, pp. 116-17.

'I am your Lord, there is no god except me, the living, the eternal—I who brought you out of the land of Egypt by an exalted hand and powerful arm. Do not worship a god other than me, do not associate anything with me, and do not make an image of me. You will not see me, but you will hear my word (*kalāmī*).'[4]

However, hearing the voice of Allah causes all the seventy to fall unconscious from terror. When they regain consciousness, they beg Moses to receive Allah's word on their behalf. Allah gives his commandments and prohibitions to Moses, and then Moses tells the seventy, who affirm, 'We have heard our Lord and we obey.' When the seventy return to the community, the people ask, 'What did your Lord command you and prohibit you?'[5]

In answer to this question of the common people, writes Muqātil, some of the seventy report truthfully what they heard. Others of them report what they heard, but then add an extra clause at the end of Allah's saying: 'If you are not able to give up what he has forbidden you,' they advise, 'then just do what you are able.'[6]

Muqātil provides neither definition nor gloss of the verb *ḥarrafa* at this its first appearance in the Qur'an. His understanding of the verb must therefore be seen in the narrative. Muqātil uses the object *kalām* repeatedly to refer to Allah's verbal communication. There is no mention of the Torah or any other written text. The action of the group from among the seventy Jews which explains for Muqātil the meaning of *ḥarrafa* must therefore be their adding to the verbal report of the commandments of Allah an extra alleviation clause.

Muqātil's exegesis of the first *ḥarrafa* verse here signals that the verb will have a more complex meaning in the commentary than simple falsification of text.

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[4] Ibid., p. 117.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid. The *Sīra* narrative related to Q 2.75 is much shorter than that given by Muqātil, but similar in outline. The ending of that narrative, however, provides a significant variant: 'Then [Moses] went back with them to the Children of Israel and when he came to them a party of them tampered with (*ḥarrafa*) what they had been commanded; and when Moses said to the children of Israel, "Allah has ordered you to do so-and-so," they…contradicted what Allah had said to them.' Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīrat al-nabī*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, Cairo, 1963, vol. II, p. 379.

2. *Insulting the Prophet*

> Some of the Jews tamper with (*yuḥarrifūna*) words from their places saying, 'We have heard and we disobey' and 'Hear, may you not hear' and *rāʿinā*, twisting with their tongues and defaming religion…. (*Nisā*' 46)

For his interpretation of this verse, Muqātil pictures a polemical situation between Muḥammad and the Jews of Madīna.[7] The Jews 'tamper with the words out of their places.' This same phrase, *yuḥarrifūna al-kalima ʿan mawāḍiʿihi*, appears at Q 5.13 and Q 5.41. In this first explanation of the phrase, Muqātil writes that the Jews do this action 'through tampering (*taḥrīf*)'.[8] The 'words', writes Muqātil, are the description of Muḥammad. He further explains 'out of their places' as 'out of its declaration (*bayān*) in the Torah'. And he finally qualifies the action in view as 'twisting with their tongues',[9] a phrase which appears later in the verse. From these words he understands an action of disrespect toward Muḥammad and Islam.

When Muqātil explains the expressions of the Jews indicated in the verse, he seems to offer them as an illustration of what he means by the verb *ḥarrafa*. By all indications—in the verse itself, in the exegete's brief glosses at Q 4.46, and in his exegesis of Q 2.104—these are speeches of resistance or attempts to insult. Muqātil's comment on 'twisting with their tongues and slandering religion' is that the Jews are denigrating the religion of Muḥammad in contrast to their own. He therefore understands the speeches to signify disrespect or insubordination to Muḥammad. In his explanation of Q 2.104, where *rāʿinā* first appears, he understands this mysterious word to be a term of abuse among the Jews.[10] The object of the verb 'twisting' in this scenario is not the Torah or the description of Muḥammad within it, but rather the religion of Muḥammad in the present encounter. When Muqātil uses the term *taḥrīf* a second time, he joins it with 'slandering religion' in such a manner as to show that he under-

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[7] *Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaymān*, vol. I, pp. 376-7.
[8] Ibid., p. 376.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid., p. 128. Al-Farrā' (d. 207/822) also wrote that the Jews said *rāʿinā* 'aiming it toward the abuse (*shatm*) of Muḥammad' (*Kitāb maʿānī al-Qur'ān*, ed. Aḥmad Yūsuf Najātī and Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Najjār, Beirut, n.d., vol. I, p. 272).

stands the *taḥrīf* of the Jews to be their twisting with their tongues.

It is the Jews' action of abuse toward the Prophet of Islam which Muqātil finds to be the tampering indicated by the verse. Muqātil gives no hint here of a concept of the corruption or falsification of the text of the Torah.

3. *Refusing to acknowledge the truth*

> So for their breaking their covenant we cursed them and made their hearts hard, they tampering with (*yuḥarrifūna*) words from their places; and they have forgotten a portion of what they were reminded of.... (*Mā'ida* 13)

Muqātil's exegesis of this verse is dominated by the concept of covenant, [11] a key term which appears in the qur'anic verse immediately prior. Muqātil offers no new information about the verb *ḥarrafa*. But he writes, as he did in his exegesis of Q 4.46, that 'the words (*kalim*) are the characteristic (*ṣifa*) of Muḥammad'. And immediately following this he offers a longer explanation of the tampering action he understands from the verse. On 'they have forgotten a portion of what they were reminded of', Muqātil writes:

> This is about how Allah, powerful and exalted, made a covenant with Banū Isrā'īl in the Torah that they would believe in Muḥammad, may God bless him and give him peace, and give credence to him. He is written [in what is] with them in the Torah. Then when Allah, powerful and exalted, sent him, they disbelieved in him and envied him, and said, 'This one is not from the descendents of Isḥāq, but rather he is from the descendents of Ismā'īl.'[12]

In this passage, the exegete introduces into the discussion of tampering two significant considerations. One is the claim that the command to respond appropriately to the Prophet of Islam is part of the covenant which Allah made with the children of Israel. The second is that the motivation of envy, awakened in the children of Israel when they saw that Muḥammad was not of their own kind, led them to reject him.

Muqātil presents the idea that the covenant which Allah made

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[11] *Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaymān*, vol. I, pp. 461-2.
[12] Ibid., p. 461.

with the people of Israel included a clause to anticipate and accept Muḥammad. An important feature of his exegesis is the phrase: 'He is recorded [in what is] with them (*'indahum*) in the Torah.' The most natural conclusion to draw from Muqātil's use of this expression is that he envisions an intact text of the Torah in the possession of the Jews of Madīna. At issue for the exegete is not a previously corrupted or falsified text, but rather an inappropriate response to what is in the text. The narrative logic is that the description of Muḥammad is there in the Torah which they possess, but that when he appears they refuse to acknowledge it out of envy.

It is the Jews' action of deceit toward the Prophet of Islam in a contemporary response which Muqātil finds to be the tampering indicated by the verse. In the exegete's mind, the scriptures of the Jews contain a covenant in which the proper response to Muḥammad is specified. But the envy that has grown in the hearts of the Jews, born out of ethnic pride, has caused them to conceal and to neglect the truths written in the divine book they possess.

4. *Setting aside a Torah command*

> …the Jews who listen to falsehood, listen to other folk, who have not come to you, tampering with (*yuḥarrifūna*) words from their places, saying, 'If you are given this, then take it; if you are not given it, beware!'…. (*Mā'ida* 41)

In Muqātil's exegesis of this verse, a long narrative about the Jews, Muḥammad and the 'verse of stoning' takes centre stage.[13] Q 5.41 is one of the verses most frequently cited by Muslim and Western scholars alike in relation to the accusation of falsification.[14]

When Muqātil reaches the phrases about tampering, he gives their meaning by telling a story about particular Jews in Madīna during the rule of Muḥammad there. On behalf of the Jews of Khaybar, Kaʿb b. al-Ashraf and other Jewish leaders ask Muḥammad for a

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[13] Ibid., pp. 474-8.

[14] Georges Vajda claimed that the stoning verse story was 'the most typical case for the illegitimate alteration of the Torah, upon which the Muslim tradition insists with the greatest complacency' ('Juifs et musulmans selon le ḥadīth', *Journal Asiatique* 229, 1937, [pp. 52-127] p. 92).

ruling on adultery. A pair of adulterers from Khaybar are set before the Prophet of Islam. The angel Gabriel gives Muḥammad the correct answer, then tells him to appoint a Torah scholar as mediator. Muḥammad therefore proceeds to the Jews' house of study to question their religious leaders. He singles out Ibn Ṣūriyā, adjures him to honesty, then asks him: 'Did you find in your book that stoning is the punishment for the one who commits adultery?'[15] Ibn Ṣūriyā affirms that it is so, then adds that he would have concealed (*katama*) this had he not sworn to tell the truth. The Prophet of Islam exults in the confirmation of the words of Gabriel, exclaiming, 'Allah is greater! I am the first to revive one of the *sunnas* of Allah.'[16] Muḥammad then pronounces the sentence for the two adulterers, and they are immediately stoned beside the door of his mosque.[17]

A number of elements in this story make it a prime generator of meaning and momentum, and influence the understanding of the tampering action. First of all, the dishonesty and deviousness of the Jews of Khaybar, and the connivance of the Jews of Madīna, are revealed to the reader right at the start. A test of prophethood is set up, the details of which Muḥammad does not know but to which the reader is privy. The conditions of successfully passing the test are provided beforehand, along with the possibility that Muḥammad may succeed—and indeed the Jews know that he may succeed. With the help of Gabriel, Muḥammad devises a clever strategem for flushing out the Jewish scholar who knows the Torah best. He adjures Ibn Ṣūriyā, with insight into his Jewish religion, in such a way that he cannot but tell the truth. And the climax is striking: this young, bright scholar who knows the Torah best of all[18] admits that he found the stoning penalty in that scripture; and then adds for good measure—while he is still feeling sworn to honesty and before he mysteriously disbelieves again—'By Allah, Muḥammad, the Jews do indeed know that you are a true prophet, but they envy you.'[19] Muḥammad successfully passes the test of prophethood that was

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[15] *Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaymān*, vol. I, p. 476.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., p. 477.
[18] Literally, 'This is the most knowledgeable one in the Torah who remains' (ibid., p. 476).
[19] Ibid., p. 477.

cynically placed before him, and his exultation at reviving 'one of the *sunna*s of Allah' becomes an epiphany of self-discovery.

The Prophet of Islam is here claiming a link with Allah's revelations of the past. The attestation of his prophethood in this narrative is his ability to make a judgment that is contained in the Torah, and his authority is measured here against the accepted authority of an earlier scripture. The 'proof' of his authority is that the judgment he makes is written down in the Torah and—crucially—can be read from the Torah at that very time and place. To suggest at that point that the Torah in the hands of the Jews is corrupted would destroy the proof of authority which is being advanced.[20]

Muqātil interprets the 'words' (*kalim*) with which the Jew are tampering as the commandment of stoning. He glosses 'out of their places' as 'out of its declaration (*bayān*) in the Torah'. The exegete offers no further gloss or etymological information on the verb *ḥarrafa*. Therefore its meaning must be gleaned from the narrative. The narrative shows that the tampering action which Muqātil understands from *ḥarrafa* here is concealing or neglecting a judgment which can be found in an existing book—not an action of textual falsification.

5. *Substituting one saying for another*

> And when we said, 'Enter this township, and eat easefully of it wherever you will, and enter in at the gate, prostrating, and say, *ḥiṭṭatun*. We will forgive you your transgressions, and increase the good-doers.' Then the evildoers substituted (*baddala*) a saying other than that which had been said to them…. (*Baqara* 58-9)

Q 2.59 comes in the middle of a long section of scriptural narrative

[20] This conclusion is supported by the fact that during the first centuries of Islam, the stoning verse story was connected with various other verses in the Qur'an. For example, ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 211/827) narrates the story to explain Q 5.44 ('Surely we sent down the Torah, wherein is guidance and light; thereby the prophets who had surrendered themselves gave judgment'). 'Abd al-Razzāq concludes his exegesis of this verse by claiming that the stoning verse story shows Muḥammad to be one of the 'surrendered prophets' who gave judgment according to the Torah (*Tafsīr al-Qur'an al-ʿazīz*, Beirut, 1991, vol. I, p. 185). In his *kitāb al-tafsīr*, al-Bukhārī tells the story around the words spoken by Muḥammad: 'Bring you the Torah now and recite it, if you are truthful' (Q 3.93) (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Cairo, 1955, vol. V, p. 170, *bāb* 58).

about the children of Israel (Q 2.49-74). Muqātil explains this verse by telling a story about Banū Isrāʾīl from the distant past, when that community was led by Yūshuʿa ibn Nūn.[21] The verb of alteration in Q 2.59 is *baddala*, to change or substitute. The action of tampering which Muqātil understands here is a verbal substitution or replacement of one expression with another.

When Banū Isrāʾīl were about to enter through the gate of a town called Īlyāʾ, recounts Muqātil, Allah commanded them to say the expression *ḥiṭṭatun* at the moment of entering. In the event, the good-doers voiced the expression which they had been commanded to say. Others, however, said '*ḥaṭā saqamāthā*', which Muqātil interprets to mean 'red wheat (*ḥinṭa ḥamrāʾ*)'. The exegete also explains the way in which this was said: 'They said that mocking (*istihzāʾ*) and altering (*tabdīl*) what they had been commanded.'[22]

Along with the verbal alteration of an expression came a substitution of posture as well. Allah had commanded Banū Isrāʾīl to enter the town prostrate, which Muqātil pictures as 'bending upon one side of their faces'.[23] The disobedient people, however, enter the gate lying down.

A variant of this verse appears in Q 7.182. Muqātil treats this verse only briefly.[24] There is some variation in the details of his interpretation. However, as at Q 2.59, he understands the verse to refer to the verbal replacement of one expression with another, and the substitution of one posture for another. There is no suggestion in these passages of the falsification or corruption of a text of scripture.[25]

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[21] *Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaymān*, vol. I, pp. 109-10.
[22] Ibid., p. 110.
[23] Ibid., p. 109.
[24] Ibid., vol. II, p. 69.
[25] A third occurrence of *baddala* comes at Q 2.211; 'Ask the Children of Israel how many a clear sign we gave them. Whoso changes (*yubaddil*) Allah's blessing after it has come to him, Allah is terrible in retribution.' Muqātil understands this verse to mean that the Jews of Madīna did not respond to Allah in a way that was appropriate to the many signs given to their forefathers. 'They disbelieved (*kafara*) in the Lord of these blessings when they disbelieved in Muḥammad' (ibid., vol. I, p. 180).

Conclusion on the verses of alteration

Muqātil reveals his understanding of *taḥrīf* and *tabdīl* in these verses largely through the narratives he offers, and he clearly does not understand the qur'anic occurrences of *ḥarrafa* and *baddala* to mean corruption or falsification of text. As we have seen, the narratives portray a variety of actions which do not include falsification of text. It seems that for Muqātil, *taḥrīf* and *tabdīl* were elastic terms comparable to the English 'tampering'. It should also be noted that Muqātil's approach is outside the common characterization of the accusation of *taḥrīf* as either *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* or *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* (change of interpretation or change of text).

Exegesis of other tampering verbs

Casting the net out wider into the semantic field of tampering covers several other verses which have been associated with the doctrine of corruption. The theme of inappropriate response to the Prophet of Islam dominates Muqātil's exegesis of verses containing the verbs *labbasa* (to confuse),[26] *lawā* (to twist)[27] and *nasiya* (to forget).[28]

Muqātil understands verses containing *labbasa* to refer to actions by Jewish leaders to confuse the Jewish community by concealing information about Muḥammad in the Torah and by giving mixed messages about how to respond to the Prophet of Islam. He interprets the *nasiya* verses to mean choices by the People of the Book to disbelieve in Muḥammad in spite of the clear commandments in their scriptures to believe in him and follow him. Twisting words with their tongues (Q 4.46) or twisting their tongues (Q 3.78) would seem to be a verbal action. Indeed, at Q 4.46 Muqātil understands it this way. However, his exegesis of Q 3.78 indicates a quite different action of tampering.[29]

[26] Q 2.42, 3.71.
[27] Q 3.78, 4.46.
[28] Q 2.44, 5.13, 5.14.
[29] *Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaymān*, vol. I, p. 286.

1. *Erasing the description of Muḥammad*

> And there is a sect of them twist (*yalawna*) their tongues with the book, that you may suppose it part of the book, yet it is not part of the book; and they say, 'It is from Allah,' yet it is not from Allah, and they speak falsehood against Allah, and that wittingly. (*Āl 'Imrān* 78)

In his exegesis of the second part of Q 3.78, Muqātil writes that the locus of tampering is the Torah itself. On 'it is not part of the book' Muqātil writes that the Jews wrote something other than the description (*na'ṭ*) of Muḥammad, 'and they erased (*maḥā*) his description'.[30]

At Q 4.46, Muqātil understands the verb *lawā* to mean a verbal action of Jews in inappropriate response to the Prophet of Islam. This leads to the conclusion that Muqātil's statement of textual falsification at Q 3.78 is triggered not by *lawā* but rather by the scriptural clause, 'that you may suppose it part of the book, yet it is not part of the book; and they say, "it is from Allah," yet it is not from Allah.' This clause bears a resemblance to the wording of Q 2.79, about which the exegete makes a similar accusation of textual falsification (described below).

2. *Exegesis of the concealment verses*

The verb which occurs most frequently in the Qur'an's semantic field of tampering is *katama*, to conceal.[31] Together with the occurrences of the similar verbs *asarra*[32] and *akhfā*,[33] they lead us to eleven interesting passages in Muqātil's commentary.

The eleven concealment verses are all understood in a similar way by Muqātil. In each case, he identifies the locus of the tampering action as the Torah. The actors are consistently Jews in Arabia at the time of Muḥammad. The object of tampering in all but one passage is information about the Prophet of Islam. The exegete claims in his comments on Q 2.146 that the focus of concealment is rather

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[30] Ibid.
[31] Q 2.42, 2.140, 2.146, 2.159, 2.174, 3.71, 3.187, 4.37.
[32] Q 2.77.
[33] Q 5.15, 6.91.

the information about the *qibla* in the Torah.[34] At Q 5.15 and Q 6.91 he adds the matter of stoning to the matter of Muḥammad,[35] and at Q 2.159 he indicates these two objects plus commandments of what is permitted and forbidden.[36]

Muqātil writes that the Jews are concealing this information. The motivation for this concealing, he writes at Q 3.73, is envy and ethnic pride.[37] The exegete thus understands concealing to be an action of inappropriate and ill-conceived response to the truth in the Jewish scripture about the Prophet of Islam.

The frequency of concealment verbs in suras 2-7, and as a consequence the frequency of concealment explanations in the commentary, produces a cumulative effect. The accusation of concealing logically assumes an intact text of scripture, and Muqātil's exegesis of the concealment verses therefore paints a backdrop against which verses of alteration must be interpreted.

3. *Writing false information*

A circle even beyond the semantic field of tampering circumscribes verses which contain expressions of action: 'selling for a small price',[38] 'throwing behind backs',[39] and 'writing with hands'.[40] Muqātil understands these expressions to indicate a variety of tampering actions other than falsification of text. But there is one notable exception to this pattern:

> So woe to those who write the book with their hands, then say, 'This is from Allah,' that they may sell it for a little price; so woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for their earnings. (*Baqara* 79)

Muqātil understands this verse to mean an action by Jewish leaders in Madīna to alter the text of the Torah.[41] He explains that 'those

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[34] *Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaymān*, vol. I, pp. 147-8.
[35] Ibid., pp. 463, 575.
[36] Ibid., p. 152.
[37] Ibid., p. 284.
[38] Q 2.41, 2.79, 2.174, 3.77, 3.187, 3.199, 5.44, 9.9, 16.95.
[39] Q 2.101, 3.187.
[40] Q 2.79.
[41] *Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaymān*, vol. I, p. 118.

who write the *kitāb* with their hands' refers to writing something other than the description (*naʿt*) of Muḥammad. He writes: 'This is about how the chiefs of the Jews of Madīna erased (*maḥā*) the description of Muḥammad (may God bless him and give him peace) from the Torah, and wrote other than his description, and told the Jews something other than the description of Muḥammad.'[42] In explaining a later part of the verse, 'what their hands have written', Muqātil adds: 'meaning in the Torah of the alteration (*taghyīr*) of the description of Muḥammad'.[43] Muqātil therefore understands the expression 'write the book with hands' at Q 2.79 to mean an action by Jewish leaders in Madīna to insert false information into the Torah in their possession.

The accusation here and at Q 3.78 is not of corruption of the text of the Torah by neglect or deliberate falsification prior to Islam. Muqātil understands that an intact Torah is in the hands of the Jews when they meet the Prophet of Islam in Madīna. They alter the text of the Torah as a response to claims of Muḥammad's prophethood.

Falsification of text in context

Muqātil's accusations of falsification at Q 2.79 and Q 3.78 suggest that this tradition was already in circulation in the middle of the second Islamic century. At the same time, these accusations raise questions about the consistency of Muqātil's treatment of the tampering theme. Among explanations of twenty-five tampering verses, he makes the accusation of textual alteration in only two passages. Most of the remaining explanations seem to assume an intact Torah. The accusations of alteration must therefore be described as 'punctiliar'. They show no continuity with their contexts in the commentary. They also do not fit into the series of Muqātil's explanations of other tampering verses.

What could account for the presence of accusations of falsification in Muqātil? What could explain their isolation? The presence of the accusations seems to be related to the phrase 'those who write the

[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.

kitāb with their hands' in Q 2.79. This wording may in turn relate to a tradition in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī:

> …How can you question the People of the Book, when your book which he has sent down to his Prophet (may God bless him and give him peace) is the more recent news from Allah and you recite it undistorted (*yushab*); and when Allah has told you that the People of the Book changed (*baddala*) what Allah wrote, and altered (*ghayyara*) the book with their hands, then said, 'It is from Allah,' that they may sell it for a little price?...[44]

The phrases 'with their hands' and 'from Allah, that they may sell it for a little price' are identical in scripture and tradition. Could similarities of wording have led Muqātil to recount the tradition in his exegesis of Q 2.79 and Q 3.78?

As for the isolated nature of the falsification accusations, a clue may be found in Muqātil's exegetical method. Muqātil explains the meanings of the qur'anic verses with story.[45] And looming over his entire commentary is a narrative framework which gives cohesion to the diverse materials of the Qur'an.[46] What then is the story which Muqātil wants to tell?

Extensive research in the contexts of Muqātil's tampering passages reveals a story about attestation to Muḥammad in the earlier scriptures, and the obstinacy of the Jews of Madīna to accept the claims of Muḥammad's authority. Does the suggestion of textual corruption or falsification fit into this narrative? If the goal is to prove that Muḥammad confirms what is in the Torah and to show the Jews culpable for their rejection of him, is it better for the text of the Torah to be intact—or already corrupted? Can the dominant narrative have an influence on the way in which the verses of tampering are interpreted?

This concept of narrative influence can be tested in the *Sīra*. Ibn Isḥāq (d. 151/768), a contemporary of Muqātil, offers a great deal of material connecting the appearance of the Prophet of Islam with the prophecies of his coming in the Torah and Gospel. An extended section about Muḥammad and the Jews of Madīna gives a narrative

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[44] *Kītāb al-shahādāt*, *bāb* 31, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. III, p. 163.

[45] J. Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, Oxford, 1977, pp. 127f.

[46] K. Versteegh, 'Grammar and exegesis: the origins of Kufan grammar and the *Tafsīr Muqātil*', *Der Islam* 67, 1990, [pp. 206-42] p. 210.

framework for *Sūrat al-Baqara* as well as for many other passages in suras 3-5.[47] In this section eleven of the tampering verses are touched on. The consistent message of this entire section is that the Jews have in their hands scriptures which contain references to Muḥammad, yet they obstinately refuse to respond appropriately.

Ibn Isḥāq's understanding of the alteration verses is substantially the same as that of Muqātil. When Ibn Isḥāq recounts the story of the stoning verse, however, he adds a revealing anecdote.[48] In order to make his judgment, the Prophet of Islam calls for a Torah to be brought out. But a rabbi cleverly conceals the stoning verse with his hand. When ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Salām knocks the rabbi's hand from off the verse, Muḥammad declares, 'Woe to you Jews! What has induced you to abandon the judgment of Allah which you hold in your hands?'[49]

A striking fact about the narratives Ibn Isḥāq offers in the *Sīra* is the absence of any accusation of the textual falsification of the previous scriptures. He offers no comments on Q 2.79 or Q 3.78. Why did the author of the *Sīra* not use these verses in his narrative? If he had heard the accusation of falsification, why did he not include it in his characterization of the Jews of Madīna? There is little doubt that in this salvation history the Jews emerge as a deceitful, obstinate, indeed treacherous people. Did Ibn Isḥāq not consider the accusation of their falsification of the text of the Torah helpful for his portrayal? Was he possibly not familiar with the accusation?

The mystery of Muqātil's accusations of falsification continues in the *ḥadīth*. The tradition from al-Bukhāri cited above seems to be the only tradition in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* about alteration of the Torah. At the same time, al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* contains many traditions which tell of interactions between the Jews and Muḥammad in the narrative style of Muqātil's commentary and the *Sīra*. These other traditions seem to assume an intact Torah in the hands of the Jews. Two examples are the version of the stoning verse story associated with Q 3.93 ('Bring here the Torah and recite it if you are truthful'),[50] and the tradition that, 'The People of the Book used to read the

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[47] *Sīrat al-Nabī*, vol. II, pp. 372-412.
[48] Ibid., p. 406.
[49] Ibid.
[50] *Kitāb tafsīr al-Qur'an*, *bāb* 58, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. V, p. 170.

Torah in Hebrew and give its interpretation (*fassara*) in Arabic for the people of Islam.'[51]

Many other examples of the magnetic appeal of narrative could be given from *sīra*, *ḥadīth* and early *tafsīr*. Even the classical commentators seemed to prefer narrative to theological dogma.[52] If the reigning narrative of Jewish obstinacy exerted an influence on Muqātil's interpretation of the tampering verses, it would help to account for the isolated nature of his accusations of falsification.

Conclusion

It is clear from the analysis of Muqātil's exegesis of the tampering verses that he did not understand the verbs *ḥarrafa* and *baddala* to refer to an act of textual falsification of the earlier scriptures. Rather, he explains the verses containing these verbs with a variety of tampering actions which revolve around response to authority. He recounts stories of verbal alteration of divine commands from the history of the children of Israel. He also tells stories of inappropriate Jewish response to the Prophet of Islam.

Muqātil understands Q 2.79 to refer to a Jewish act of falsification of the text of the Torah. This understanding seems to carry over into his exegesis of Q 3.78. The trigger for this interpretation seems to be the phrase, 'write the book with their hands' (Q 2.79). Muqātil places the action in Madīna at the time of Muḥammad's rule as part of an inappropriate Jewish response to his appearance.

Muqātil's interpretations of the remaining twenty-three verses of tampering portray a lively variety of actions. He mostly tells how the people of the book conceal the contents of the scriptures which are with them. He recounts verbal demonstrations of disrespect toward the Prophet of Islam, rejection of his authority, and refusals to follow

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[51] *Kītāb al-tawḥīd*, *bāb* 51, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. VIII, p. 213.

[52] Wansbrough wrote concerning the popularity of 'haggadic' expression, 'The substance of Bukhārī, Muslim and Tirmidhī is that of Muqātil, Ibn Isḥāq, Sufyān, and Kalbī. It is also that of the entire exegetical tradition, excluding the masoretic literature, up to and including Suyūṭī' (*Quranic Studies*, p. 183). Norman Calder documented the appeal of narrative in his study of major commentators, 'Tafsīr from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr: problems in the description of a genre, illustrated with reference to the story of Abraham', in G.R. Hawting and A.-K.A. Shareef, eds, *Approaches to the Qur'an*, London, 1993, [pp. 101-40] pp. 108, 118-21.

and obey him according to the stipulations of the covenant. The Jews take the law of Allah so lightly that they set aside important commandments just because they lack the will to apply them. The intact text of the Torah remains solidly in the background of all of these actions of tampering.

IS THERE ROOM FOR CORRUPTION IN THE 'BOOKS' OF GOD?

CLARE WILDE

In traditional Islamic thought, there are three 'doctrines' concerning the Qur'an: its uncreatedness, or eternity; its Arabness; and its inimitability. The Qur'an itself hints at two of these (Arabness and inimitability), but it is not until the early third/ninth century that Muslim scholars engage in full-fledged theological debates on these issues. While the theological, philosophical and philological writings of Muslims on these topics have been extensively studied, Christian Arabic writings have yet to be mined for the insight they might provide into the nuances of these debates and the milieu in which they arose. For, just like their Muslim neighbors, an ever-increasing number of Christians in *Dār al-Islām* were coming to adopt the language of the holy book of Islam. And, just as with Muslims, there were both ethnic Arabs and non-Arabs who were, by the third/ninth century, Arabophone. How did Christians writing in Arabic view the holy book of Islam? More specifically, did ethnically Arab Christians differ from other Arabophone Christians in their estimation of the Qur'an?

From the inception of Islam, Christians have not hesitated to attack the Qur'an[1]—but this has not been the only response of Christians to the text. In fact, Christians who wrote in Arabic tended to be less polemical in their discussions of the holy book of Islam than were their non-Arabophone co-religionists.[2] And an interesting phenomenon found in some Christian Arabic texts[3] is the terming

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[1] For a comprehensive overview of the variety of Christian responses to Islam, see J.-M. Gaudeul, *Encounters and Clashes: Islam and Christianity in History*, 2 vols, Rome, 2000.

[2] Compare, the tone of the Greek 'Heresy of the Ishmaelites' of John of Damascus (675-753) with, for example, the Arabic works of Theodore Abū Qurra (740-825) or Qusṭā b. Lūqā (c. 830-912); cf. Gaudeul, *Encounters*, vol. I, pp. 30, 97.

[3] Cf. e.g. Sinai Arabic MS 434. Also, Torah = *qur'ān* in some Jewish writings (or also *umm al-kitāb*); cf. Mosheh ibn 'Ezra', *Kītāb al-muḥādhara wa-al-mudākara*, ed. A. Halkin, Jerusalem, 1975, pp. 25, 54, and cf. p. 254; cited on p. 23 of R. Brann, 'El

of the Qurʾan, in addition to the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, as among the 'books of God' (*kutub Allāh*).

A definitive assessment of the extent to which this terminology is an example of 'political correctness' or, at the very least, an adoption of Muslim terminology, is not possible. That Christians writing in Arabic were critically engaged with Muslim discussions of the nature of the Qurʾan and Bible, the *kutub Allāh*, however, is attested to by the recurrence of similar themes in both Christian and Muslim texts.[4] The Christian response to the qurʾanic and Islamic charge that the Bible has been corrupted is the subject of the present discussion. For, one aspect of this response is that it is not the Bible but, rather, the Qurʾan, that has been 'corrupted'. And, in their arguments, the Christians allude to discussions on the nature and contents—the 'textual history'—of the received ʿUthmānic codex circulating among their Muslim contemporaries.

The two contemporaneous Christian accounts of qurʾanic corruption with which we are concerned are of particular interest because they are ascribed to the caliphate of al-Maʾmūn, the initiator of the *miḥna* (in 833), which compelled Muslims who took up public position to profess that the Qurʾan was 'created' in time. While Islamicists have spent much ink on the philosophical, theological, political and even inter-confessional factors that may have contributed to the state's adoption of this position,[5] less attention has been paid to the nuances of the contemporary Christian understandings of the holy book of Islam. In particular, the differences between Arab and non-Arab Arabophone Christian discussions of the Qurʾan may shed light on trends within the Islamic world at a time in which attention was being drawn to the relationship between ethnicity and religion. For, accompanying the shift of the seat of Muslim governance from Damascus to Baghdad (in 750) was a changing consciousness of the

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Arabe y la identidad literaria de los judios de al-Andalus', in M. Fierro *et al.*, eds, *Judios y musulmanes en al-Andalus y el Magreb: Contactos intelectuales* (*Collection de la casa de Velazquez* 74), Madrid, 2002, pp. 13-58.

[4] Cf., e.g., H. Lazarus-Yafeh *et al.*, eds, *The Majlis: Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, Wiesbaden, 1999, for an overview of the Christian-Muslim polemic and apologetic literature.

[5] E.g., M. Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early ʿAbbāsids*, Leiden, 1997; P. Crone and M. Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*, Cambridge, 1983; J. Nawas, 'Inquisition', in *EQ*, vol. II, pp. 537-9; idem, 'Trial', in *EQ*, vol. V, pp. 362-3.

'requirements' for membership in the Islamic *umma*. While there was still the (contested?) issue of the presence of non-Muslim 'Arabs', an ever-increasing number of non-Arabs were professing Islam. And, with the spread of Islam among non-Arabs, the first Arabic grammars, as well as the compilation of the biographies of the Prophet and the collection of hadith, were emerging in the Persianate areas of the empire. Now, in addition to the established debates among the various branches of the tribe of Quraysh for leadership of the Muslim community,[6] was the question of how to absorb non-Arabs into the 'religion of the Arabs'.

But, in addition to the increasing ethnic diversity, the Abbasid court of al-Ma'mūn of the early third/ninth century is also famous for its poly-confessional nature. Not only were there various factions within the Muslim community itself, but also Jews, Christians of varying denominations, Zoroastrians and others who lived within and near the confines of the Persian empire. And, while the Muslim religious scholars were compelled to profess belief in the 'created' nature of the Qur'an, communication among the various denominations and religions was encouraged. In fact, records of debates between Shī'īs and Sunnīs, Jews, Christians and Muslims are part of the historical record.[7] The parallel developments in Christian and Muslim theological methods—such as 'dialectical theology'—attest to such interactions.[8] And, a not uncommon trope in early Christian Arabic literature is the polemical debate between Christians and Muslims on the veracity of their respective religions. The two texts

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[6] Cf. e.g. M. Sharon, 'The Umayyads as *ahl al-bayt*', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 14, 1991, pp. 115-52. See also idem, 'The development of the debate around the legitimacy of authority in early Islam', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 5, 1984, pp. 121-41; P. Cobb, 'Al-Maqrīzī, Hashimism, and the early caliphates', *Mamlūk Studies Review* 7, 2003, pp. 69-81; A. Afsarruddin, *Excellence and Precedence: Medieval Islamic Discourse on Legitimate Leadership*, Leiden, 2002; T. El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate*, Cambridge, 1999.

[7] For an introductory overview of the Christian debate literature, see S.H. Griffith, 'The monk in the emir's majlis: reflections on a popular genre of Christian literary apologetics in Arabic in the early Islamic period', in Lazarus-Yafeh, *The Majlis*, pp. 13-65.

[8] Cf. M. Cook, 'The origins of kalām, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 43, 1980, pp. 32-43; S.H. Griffith, 'Faith and reason in Christian kalām: Theodore Abū Qurrah on discussing the true religion', in S.K. Samir and J.S. Nielsen, eds, *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750-1258)*, Leiden, 1994, pp. 1-43.

that have been chosen for the present discussion are examples of these inter-religious debates.

Accounts of Muslim-Christian 'debates' or 'dialogues' are found prior to al-Maʾmūn's time. For example, the Nestorian Catholicos Timothy I (+780-823) debated the virtue of Christianity and Islam with the caliph al-Mahdī (r. 775-85), an account of which has circulated in both Syriac and Arabic,[9] and the themes touched upon recur in texts familiar in the Arabic tradition. Some of al-Mahdī's demands of Timothy are preserved as having been echoed by al-Maʾmūn (r. 813-33) and his court, and are found in both our texts: namely, the debate between the Melkite Bishop of Ḥarrān, Theodore Abū Qurra, and various Muslim 'notables',[10] and in the correspondence between the Muslim 'Hāshimī' cousin of al-Maʾmūn and a Nestorian from the ancient Arab tribe of Kinda:[11] the so-called Hāshimī-Kindī correspondence.[12] Although these texts differ widely in their approach to Islam (ranging from con-

[9] A. Mingana, 'The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch before the Caliph Mahdi', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 12, 1928, pp. 137-298; Syriac abridgement in A. van Roey, 'Une apologie syriaque attribuée à Elie de Nisibe, *Le Muséon* 5, 1946, pp. 381-97. For Arabic versions, see R. Caspar, 'Les versions arabes du dialogue entre le Catholicos Timothée I et le calife al-Mahdî (IIe/VIIIe) siècle, "Mohammed a suivi la voie des prophètes"', *Islamochristiana* 3, 1977, pp. 107-75; also H. Putman, *L'église et l'Islam sous Timothée I (780-823)*, Beirut, 1975.

[10] Griffith, 'The monk in the emir's majlis'. On the historicity of the encounter between Abū Qurra and al-Maʾmūn, see S.H. Griffith, 'Reflections on the biography of Theodore Abū Qurrah', *Parole de l'Orient* 18, 1993, [pp. 143-70] pp. 156-8. There is an edition by I. Dick, ed., *La discussion d'Abū Qurra avec les ulémas musulmans devant le calife al-Maʾmūn*, Aleppo, 1999. Twenty-six manuscripts of the text, dating from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries, and in Melkite and Jacobite recensions, are known. For the manuscript history of the text, see Griffith, 'The monk in the emir's majlis', pp. 38-9. A student of S.K. Samir is currently working on a critical edition of this account.

[11] This Arab tribe 'played a decisive role in the military, political, and cultural history of the [Arabian] peninsula before the rise of Islam', attempting to unite the tribes of north and central Arabia, and bringing with it a sedentary lifestyle, as well as literacy and even Christianity; cf. I. Shahid, 'Kinda', in *EI*^{2}, vol. V, pp. 118-20.

[12] ʿAbd al-Masīḥ al-Kindī, *Risāla b. Ismāʿīl al-Hāshimī ilā ʿAbd al-Masīḥ b. Isḥāq al-Kindī wa-risāla al-Kindī ilā al-Hāshimī*, London, 1912. See the English translation in N.A. Newman, ed. and trans., *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue: A Collection of Documents from the First Three Islamic Centuries (632-900 A.D.)*, Hatfield PA, 1993, pp. 365-545, and the French translation of G. Tartar, *Dialogue islamo-chrétien sous le calife al-Maʾmūn (813-34)*, Paris, 1985. Cf. G. Anawati, 'Polémique, apologie et dialogue islamo-chrétiens; positions classiques et positions contemporaines', *Euntes Docete* 22, 1969, [pp. 375-452] pp. 380-92.

ciliatory to overtly hostile), and are not confined to Christian *Arabic* manuscripts, they share an intimate familiarity with the text of Islam's holy book, as well as other thematic parallels in their defense of the veracity of Christianity (e.g. Christological and Trinitarian defenses, as well as a mapping of anti-Muslim polemics on previously anti-Jewish themes[13]). While the 'theological' positions of the protagonists (Melkite vs Nestorian), as well as the typological nature of the discussions, should not be overlooked, the present discussion will attempt to highlight differences that might arise between an 'Arab' Christian's response to the Qur'an and that of an Arabophone Christian in the court of al-Ma'mūn.

Both texts allege to be 'records' of actual encounters between Christians and members of al-Ma'mūn's court; however, in each, the Christian comes out on top. And, while both Abū Qurra and al-Kindī successfully defend Christianity, it is not solely a 'defensive' enterprise, for each of the Christian protagonists also engages in some pointed offensive maneuvers, inasmuch as weaknesses in the position of Islamic belief are highlighted.

While both Christians are intent upon defending the veracity of the Christian religion, the tone of each argument is very different. Theodore is always respectful, and only occasionally alludes to 'problems' with the Qur'an or conflicting Muslim interpretations thereof. When he does make reference to the Qur'an, he tends to indicate how Muslims have misinterpreted it: in Theodore's view, if the Qur'an were to be read 'properly', it would not only not conflict with 'orthodox' Christian claims about Christ—or the Trinitarian view of God—but would also encourage a respectful treatment of Christians on the part of Muslims.[14] It is also interesting to note that, rather than taking issue with the 'apocryphal' account of Jesus' breathing life into a clay bird that is found in the Qur'an (Q 3.49, 5.110), the Bishop of Ḥarrān refers to this as

[13] Cf. the common themes touched upon by the Syriac anti-Jewish 'polemicists' cited by J. Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism: The Christian-Jewish Argument in Fourth-Century Iran*, Leiden, 1971, and those used by Theodore Abū Qurra in his response to the Muslim 'notables' of al-Ma'mūn's court, e.g., circumcision (cf. pp. 70-1 of Dick's edition of Theodore, and pp. 19-28 of Neusner's translation of Aphrahat).

[14] Cf. e.g. Theodore's discussion of the 'correct' interpretation of Q 1.6-7, in Dick, *La discussion d'Abū Qurra*, pp. 75-7.

an example of the qur'anic assertion of Jesus' divinity![15] But, the bishop is also not above noting some classic challenges to a Christian acceptance of the Qur'an or Muḥammad's prophethood: e.g. the divorce ordinance of Q 33.37[16], or the houris of Q 55.56.[17]

Al-Kindī, whose tone is much harsher than that of Theodore, also cites the qur'anic injunction that Zayd should divorce his wife so that Muḥammad might marry her as an example of a qur'anic verse with which Christians would have problems.[18] But, whereas Theodore said that the *Muslims* are to blame for imputing false things to their prophet, al-Kindī explicitly denies the prophethood of Muḥammad: he was neither prescient, nor did he have any miracles.[19] Whereas Theodore points to a few qur'anic passages that 'do not pertain' to Muḥammad's 'original' message, al-Kindī relentlessly highlights the patent absurdity of certain qur'anic passages, as well as the conflicting Muslim reports about the process of the collection and codification of the Qur'an. While the different responses to the challenge of Islam by two contemporaneous Christians warrant further attention and will be discussed in some detail below, the points they raise in support of their arguments may also shed light on the discussions among their Muslim contemporaries: for many of the details of their arguments are found in the annals of Islamic history, but with the gloss of Islamic orthodoxy. And, although they are perhaps patronizing, and certainly polemical, we hope to demonstrate why neither text should be dismissed by the Islamicist interested in the milieu in which the doctrines of the nature of the Qur'an were being identified and refined.

Part of the Muslim polemic against the veracity of the Christian religion to which Abū Qurra and al-Kindī are responding is the charge of biblical corruption or alteration (*taḥrīf*).[20] And, in their response to this charge, both Abū Qurra and al-Kindī actively attack the Qur'an as, in fact, being the 'corrupt' scripture—albeit in

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[15] Ibid., p. 114.
[16] Ibid., p. 86.
[17] Ibid., p. 77.
[18] Newman, *Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue*, p. 432.
[19] Ibid., pp. 430-9.
[20] The claim that the People of the Book corrupted their sacred texts came to be used primarily to reconcile the qur'anic assertion that Muḥammad is attested in the scriptures of the Jews and Christians with the latter's denial of any biblical allusion to Muḥammad.

very different ways. Two aspects of our Christian texts are particularly relevant for our purposes: the allusion(s) to the actual process of the composition of the Qurʾan—how and why corruption may have entered, which only al-Kindī really touches on; and the discussion of the contents and form of the text itself (including Muslim disagreement on its proper interpretation) and how that might evidence 'corruption', which is touched upon by both our Christian protagonists.

'Process of corruption'

Unlike Theodore Abū Qurra, who only alludes to Muslim claims of the Qurʾan's perfection,[21] al-Kindī proffers a detailed overview of Muslim proofs of the inspired nature of their scripture:[22] Muḥammad was illiterate (*ummī*); the Qurʾan contains stories of Moses, the prophets and Christ; it was not written before Muḥammad received it, and cannot be imitated (Q 17.90; 2.21; 59.21). He counters these claims by attacking both the process of revelation and the later codification of the Qurʾan. In doing so, he mixes the Baḥīrā legend[23] (and the implication of Jewish/Christian informants of Muḥammad)[24] with elements familiar from the traditional Muslim account of the successors of Muḥammad—and the compilation of the qurʾanic *muṣḥaf*: He says that the Qurʾan originated with a monk named Sergius who wished to strengthen the Nestorian heresy (although if al-Kindī purports to be a Nestorian himself, it is highly unlikely the Christian 'perpetrator' of Muḥammad's folly would be a Nestorian). Figures such as the Yemenī Kaʿb al-Aḥbār and the Madinan ʿAbdallāh Ibn Salām, Jewish converts to Islam

[21] Cf., e.g., Dick, *Discussion d'Abū Qurra*, p. 93, as well as pp. 108 f., where the 'uncreated' nature of the Qurʾan is touched upon and implicitly refuted (see below for further discussion).

[22] Cf., Newman, *Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue*, pp. 452-70 for al-Kindī's discussion of the Qurʾan.

[23] For detailed discussion of this theme, cf., e.g., B. Roggema, 'The legend of Sergius-Baḥīrā: some remarks on its origins in the east and its traces in the west', in K. Ciggaar and H. Teule, eds, *East and West in the Crusader States: Context, Contacts, Confrontations*, Leuven, 1999, pp. 107-23; eadem, A Christian reading of the Qurʾan: the legend of Sergius-Baḥīrā and its use of Qurʾan and sīra', in D. Thomas, ed., *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, Leiden, 2001, pp. 57-73.

[24] Cf., e.g., C. Gilliot, 'Informants', in *EQ*, vol. II, pp. 512-18.

highly regarded in Islamic tradition, figure in his account.[25] But in al-Kindī's account, these figures are responsible for the insertion of Jewish laws into the Qurʾan—after the death of Muḥammad, when ʿAlī and Abū Bakr were fighting. These Jews are also accused by al-Kindī of inserting Q 2.107 (the qurʾanic polemic that Jews and Christians do not agree on the Bible) into the Qurʾan. And, although the bare bones of the ʿUthmānic collection of the Qurʾan are present in al-Kindī's account, it disagrees with the Muslim version: for example, although Sunnīs and Shīʿīs today both maintain that the ʿUthmānic codex reflects what was given to Muḥammad (although Shīʿīs insist that some other things were there that were excised in the process of codification[26]), according to al-Kindī, ʿAlī and his followers had a recension separate from that of ʿUthmān (and, in addition to the 'accepted' ʿUthmānic codex, al-Kindī alludes to other recensions: that of Ubayy b. Kaʿb, who had already died by the time ʿUthmān ordered his collection, as well as that of Ibn Masʿūd, who refused to hand over his copy). Al-Kindī also alludes to the 'case of al-Ḥajjāj' (an Iraqi governor and Umayyad supporter who is credited with the final subduing in 701 of Ibn al-Ashʿath, a Kindī who revolted against the Syrians and Umayyad caliphal rule),[27] who 'associated with the Umayyads' and would not give up his material, but put it together and sent it to some of the major areas of the Islamic world at the time. Akin to the story of ʿUthmān's recension, al-Kindī accuses al-Ḥajjāj of following ʿUthmān's example and destroying the earlier editions.[28] Intriguingly, al-Kindī alludes to the continued existence of ʿAlī's, Ibn Masʿūd's, al-Ḥajjāj's—as well as ʿUthmān's—recension in his own time. He even indicates that he has read the 'Qurʾan' of Muḥammad's contemporary (and rival), the 'pseudo-prophet Musaylima'.[29]

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[25] Newman, *Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue*, p. 454. In Islamic tradition, ʿAbdallāh b. Salām is 'the typical representative of that group of Jewish scribes which honored the truth, admitting that Muḥammad was the Prophet predicted in the Torah, and protecting him from the intrigues of their co-religionists' (cf. J. Horovitz, 'Abd Allāh b. Salām', in *EI*^{2}, vol. I, p. 52). Kaʿb is considered the most ancient authority on Judeo-Islamic traditions (cf. M. Schmitz, 'Kaʿb al-Aḥbār', in *EI*^{2}, vol. IV, pp. 316-17).

[26] Cf. S. Lowin, 'Revision and alteration', in *EQ*, vol. IV, pp. 448-51; M.M. Bar-Asher, 'Shīʿism and the Qurʾān', in *EQ*, vol. IV, pp. 593-604.

[27] Cf. A. Dietrich, 'al-Ḥadjdjādj b. Yūsuf', in *EI*^{2}, vol. III, pp. 39-43.

[28] Newman, *Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue*, p. 458.

[29] Ibid., p. 462.

'Evidence of corruption': contents of the Qur'an

In the process of the codification of the 'Uthmānic codex, according to al-Kindī, human editing took place: Zayd b. Thābit and 'Abdallāh b. 'Abbās (or Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr) were in charge of its compilation, including rejecting what was corrupt in it.[30] This allusion to human interference in the contents of the Qur'an subsequent to Muḥammad's death meshes with a claim of al-Kindī's contemporary, Theodore Abū Qurra: namely, that the Qur'an is corrupt, inasmuch as it contains things falsely attributed to Muḥammad (e.g. Q 108 and 111, discussed below).

In contrast to al-Kindī, whose discussion of qur'anic corruption engages numerous aspects of and approaches to the Qur'an that Islamic orthodoxy itself has contested,[31] Theodore primarily targets aspects of the text that conflict with elements of Christian belief or praxis. This is not to imply that al-Kindī is above casting aspersions on aspects of the qur'anic message and details of Muḥammad's life that do not accord with Christian ethics. Far from it - for example, the allowance of more than one wife is attacked by both Theodore and al-Kindī. But, while al-Kindī implies that these details impugn any claim for the divine nature of the Qur'an, Abū Qurra's assessment is more nuanced. In Theodore's view, these are examples of Muslim claims about Muḥammad and his message that do not, in fact, accord with the reality. They are examples of corruption in the holy book, of human tampering with the received—divine?—text.

The one instance in which Abū Qurra demonstrates a clear engagement with what may have been contemporary arguments occurring in Muslim circles is his assertion that Q 108 and 111 were not part of the original qur'anic text. As these sūras have no relationship to matters of Christian doctrine or praxis, and as the exegetical tradition preserves a memory of a connection between

[30] Ibid., p. 456.

[31] Al-Kindī also makes reference to elements not found in the accepted 'Uthmānic codex but familiar to us from Shī'ī tradition, e.g. 'Umar's affirmation of the 'Verse of Stoning', two additional sūras that were not included in 'Uthmān's recension, and the claim that *Sūrat al-Nūr* was originally longer than Q 2 (Newman, *Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue*, p. 457). In yet another reference to inter-Muslim disagreements familiar from Islamic tradition, al-Kindī also alludes to the various 'readings' of the Qur'an and disagreements about them, e.g., how, in the case of disagreement as to the letter of a word, Muslims should render it in the dialect of Quraysh.

these texts, it is conceivable that Abū Qurra's statement is reflective of a (maybe politically-inspired) tradition within Muslim circles. Q 111 is traditionally understood to be a curse on a relative of Muḥammad, and hence of the Abbasid lineage; Q 108, in a minority understanding preserved by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210), is understood to refer to this same uncle of Muḥammad.[32] In the Abbasid court of al-Maʾmūn, which came to profess the 'created' nature of the Qurʾan, parts of the Qurʾan—particularly those that cast aspersions on members of the Abbasid lineage—may have been held in lesser esteem than other parts of the holy text.

Al-Ḥajjāj, according to al-Kindī, omitted many things 'among which they say were verses concerning the sons of Umayya and the sons of 'Abbās with names mentioned'. Could this be a clue to some of the intra-Muslim discussions that might be the background to Abū Qurra's assertion that Q 108 and 111 were not part of the original revelation to Muḥammad, insomuch as they are understood as casting aspersions on a forefather of the Abbasids? Like al-Kindī, might Abū Qurra have been familiar with a Qurʾan recension that, colored by political preferences, omitted qurʾanic verses that cast aspersions on the character of persons related to the contemporary (or desired) rulers? While al-Ḥajjāj (or others) might have had a vested interest in preserving the integrity of the historical memory of the Umayyads, were pro-Abbasids equally intent on the purity of their preferred leaders' past, and hence eager to eliminate verses that cast doubt on the integrity of their predecessors?

[32] R. Blachère even places the revelation of Q 108 immediately after that of Q 111 (cf. the discussion of the chronology of revelation in A.T. Welch, 'al-Qurʾān', in *EI*^{2}, vol. V, pp. 400-32, esp. p. 416). For a comprehensive overview of various Muslim and non-Muslim interpretive traditions regarding Q 108, see C. Gilliot, 'L'embarras d'un exégète musulman face à un palimpseste: Mātūrīdī et la sourate de l'abondance (*al-Kawthar*, sourate 108), avec une note savante sur le commentaire coranique d'Ibn al-Naqīb (m. 698/1298)', in R. Arnzen and J. Thielmann, eds, *Words, Texts and Concepts Cruising the Mediterranean Sea: Studies on the Sources, Contents and Influences of Islamic Civilization and Arabic Philosophy and Science. Dedicated to Gerhard Endress on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, Leuven, 2004, pp. 33-69. Gilliot does not reference the minority understanding preserved by al-Rāzī which interests us here.

The approach of our authors

While there are thematic similarities in these accounts—e.g. defense of the validity and veracity of Christian scriptures and attempts to reconcile qur'anic Christological and Trinitarian themes with the Christian world view—one is struck by the differences in the degree to which they attack the 'Arabic' of the Qur'an. Theodore Abū Qurrā, who had been a monk in the environs of Jerusalem, but was himself Melkite bishop of Ḥarrān at the time of his debate before al-Ma'mūn, would probably not have been intimately familiar with the literary legacy of the 'Arabs'. Fluent enough in Arabic to be familiar with contemporary Muslim debates, and to critique the *contents* of the Qur'an on his own, Arabic was, nevertheless, not Theodore's traditional language, and therefore he was not in a strong position to critique the *style* of the Qur'an.

Al-Kindī, the 'Arab' Christian, does allude in detail to the style of the qur'anic language, as well as Muḥammad's 'Arabness', and the differences among the various 'Arabs'. This is not insignificant given that the Kindī-Hāshimī correspondence is situated in the court of al-Ma'mūn, at a time in which issues of the Qur'an's inimitability and createdness were being debated among Muslims—for political, among other, reasons. This discussion also paralleled the development of the 'Shu'ūbiyya' movement, that is, the assertion that 'Arabness' is not a prerequisite for being a 'good' Muslim. The trend ranged from claiming Arab/non-Arab equality, to non-Arab supremacy. One area on which much contemporary scholarship is silent is the attitude of Christian Arabs to these 'Shu'ūbbiyya' discussions. More attention has been paid to the fate of Christian Arabs, such as the Banū Taghlib, in early Umayyad times.[33] But al-Kindī's—albeit polemical—discussion evidences a still-strong sense of Arabness of Christians well into Abbasid times. How were the claims of the Arab Prophet and an Arabic scripture viewed by Christian Arabs in the midst of Sunnī-Shī'ī/ pro-Umayyad, pro-Abbasid/ pro-Mu'tazila, pro-Ḥanbalī / pro-Zaydī, etc. debates of the ninth century; the 'formative' period of classical Islamic civilization?

Now, the Arab al-Kindī does allude to the traditional Christian

[33] Cf. A.S. Tritton, *The Caliphs and their Non-Muslim Subjects: A Critical Study of the Covenant of 'Umar*, London, 1930.

refutation of the Qurʾan, namely that the appeal to the Qurʾan as evidence and proof that the one who brought it was a prophet from God, is nothing when compared to Moses' dividing the sea, or Christ's raising the dead and healing lepers. He sharpens his attack, however, by charging his Muslim audience with knowledge of the origin of the Qurʾan, and of how its authority had already been undermined before he himself took up his examination. He then goes on to point out that the Qurʾan needs to employ foreign vocabulary: either the Arabic language or Muḥammad's use of it was not rich enough for its purposes. As the former is clearly not possible (al-Kindī cites ancient Arab poets such as Imruʾ al-Qays of the tribe of Kinda as proof of the richness of the Arabic language), then either Muḥammad did not know certain words, or other, later, hands inserted them into the text of the Qurʾan. He then moves on to an impassioned discussion of the beauty of the style of the great Arab poets, to which the Qurʾan cannot measure up: in contradistinction with the smooth style of Arab poetry, the Qurʾan is broken, its diction is hybrid (in contrast with the pure Arabic of the poets), and while it may sound lofty it is 'devoid of meaning'.[34]

Here we come to the point of al-Kindī's argument that differs most from many other Christian Arabic texts, namely his attack on the style of the Qurʾan, which he makes from his standing as a Christian Arab. Here, inter-Arab rivalries (such as his disparaging of the Nabateans) are evidenced. An elevated status is accorded to the 'pure Arabs' of the desert, who are praised for their 'common tongue', in contrast with the town dwellers who 'mix with foreigners', and the Quraysh̄ī-Kindī divide is seen: 'The Quraysh were the merchants and traders of the Arabs, while the Kindī were a royal race, who ruled the rest of the Arabs'—although the eminence of the Hāshimīs is acknowledged.[35] In the light of this statement, might the Hāshimi-Kindī correspondence be viewed as the product of inter-Arab tensions in the early days of the Abbasids? For, we seem to see an attempt to vindicate the Arabness of the author as well as his Christianity, a dynamic completely absent from other

[34] For a slightly later Muslim comment on Imruʾ al-Qays, see M. Mir, 'Bāqillānī's critique of Imrʾal-Qays', in J.A. Bellamy, ed, *Studies in Near Eastern Culture and History in Memory of Ernest T. Abdel-Massih*, Ann Arbor MI, 1990, pp. 118-31.

[35] Newman, *Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue*, p. 463.

Christian Arabic texts. Rather than dismissing al-Kindī's text as unfit for insight into the *iʿjāz al-Qurʾān* debate due to its patronizing and polemical tone, Islamicists may wish to examine the Arabness of his defense of Christianity more closely—especially in the light of other contemporary polemics within the Islamic world.

This point is further supported by the exclusive presence of Arabs as the Muslim notables in the Arabophone Theodore's debate. And a superficial survey indicates that they echo allegiances found in the traditional accounts of the wives of Muḥammad (e.g. ʿĀʾisha). The inclusion of this dimension in the account of a non-Arab indicates the degree to which the intra-Arab rivalries penetrated Abbasid society. Thus, the role of inter-Arab politics and tensions in Abbasid times should be examined on two levels: Muslim-non-Muslim, as in the Hāshimī-Kindī correspondence, and inter-Muslim.

The corruption of divine books

But can our Christian texts shed light on the discussion in which Muslims themselves engaged about the nature of their scripture, which later Islamic orthodoxy has suppressed? Is it useful to read the emergence and development of the Muslim argument of biblical *taḥrīf* against a background of a similar debate of qurʾanic *taḥrīf* going on within the Muslim community itself? That the Arabophone Theodore could term the Qurʾan among the books of God, even though charging it with corruption, while the Arab al-Kindī emphatically denied the same book any divine status on the basis, among other things, of its poor Arabic style, may add another dimension to our understanding of the early Abbasid milieu in which the classical Islamic doctrines of the nature of the Qurʾan were being debated.

Perhaps the Arab-non-Arab divide often discussed in Abbasid studies had more levels of division among the Arabs themselves than the traditional Umayyad-Abbasid (or Sunnī-Shīʿī) positions. What of the Muslim-non-Muslim Arab divisions? The tribe of Quraysh (and clan of Hāshim) and the Arabs of the desert, or the Nabataeans, were not the only 'Arabs' in the Islamic world. How did the other Arabs, particularly the 'royals' who had historic ties with Rome and Persia, view the sudden hegemony of the clan of Hāshim from the tribe

of Quraysh?[36] Texts from the Christians who write in Arabic may shed light on some of these questions, which are generally regarded as inter-Muslim debates. This is particularly true for the texts from Arab Christians, rather than Arabophone Christians.[37] And, just as Arab Christians had much to criticize about the Qur'an, one might do well to ask how the Arab-non-Arab, and also inner-Arab tensions, played out in the formation of the classical Muslim doctrine on the inimitability and uncreatedness of the Qur'an.

While the Christian Arabs were concerned with asserting and defending their 'Arabness', even though they did not follow the 'Arab' *ummī* prophet, Christians who were coming to speak and write in Arabic, but who had no vested interest in 'Arabness' *per se*, were attempting to come to terms with their new overlords. While one tactic of the former appears to have been the denigration of the 'Arabness' of the so-called Arab prophet, the latter were attempting to reconcile the qur'anic vision of Christianity with the reality they knew. The difference here is one of emphasis, rather than absolute approach: the Arab Christians had to refute Islam in order to assert the validity of their own Arab identity. Arabophone Christians needed to refute Islam only insofar as the validity of their theological doctrines was concerned: there was no concomitant insistence on conversion on the basis of their cultural or ethnic heritage. In this effort, while ethical and doctrinal differences were not ignored, a common theme among many Christian Arabophone texts is the 're-reading' of the Qur'an: it is not necessarily the book itself with which Christians take issue, but the Muslim interpretations applied to it. Further, where these Christians do take issue with the contents of the Qur'an, their criticism is not infrequently leveled at Muḥammad's followers: it was not Muḥammad, but later Muslims who are to blame for problematic passages. This may be an echo of debates within the Islamic world—be they political or theological in nature. While the charge of scriptural corruption leveled by Muslims at the Bible is fairly widely studied, the full history of

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[36] Cf. F. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, Princeton NJ, 1981, for a comprehensive overview of the traditional account of the struggle for dominance within the early Islamic community.

[37] For an accessible introduction to the notion of 'Arabness' and the pre-Islamic history of Arabia, cf. R. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs: From the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam*, New York, 2001.

Muslim discussions of the possibility of corruption of the Qur'an has yet to be written.[38]

From Abū Qurra's remarks, it would seem that evidence of human tampering with the qur'anic text did not necessarily invalidate all claims to a divine origin for the holy book of Islam. Just as Christians could admit to human intervention in the transmission of their holy text, so too should Muslims. If human tampering with the received text were admitted by Muslims, the argument for its uncreated nature would not be accepted. On the other hand, if the 'created' nature were already admitted, human tampering would not necessarily challenge its 'divine' status. And, in such an understanding, the Qur'an is not so different from the traditional Christian understanding of the Bible: a divine text put together by humans. In such an environment it is not surprising to find Christians adopting qur'anic terminology ('books of God') and even counting the Qur'an among the divine texts. But, even if Arabophone Christians came to call the Qur'an a 'book of God', it must be emphasized that it was with the understanding that only a Christian reading of the qur'anic text yielded the 'proper' understanding.

It is interesting to note that only the Arab al-Kindī questions the divine nature of the Qur'an, but because of its poor Arabic style. While he is liberal in his criticism of the process of the codification and collection of the Qur'an, and is quick to point out inter-Muslim disagreements about that process, his standing as an 'Arab' Christian from the tribe of Kinda - seems to be the motivating factor in his rejection of Islam. It is this aspect of the Arab Christian response that merits further study, as it may shed light on an aspect of the intra-Arab rivalries that lasted into the Abbasid period, but which later 'orthodox' Muslim historiography may have masked. For, as the reality of the inter-Arab rivalries receded further into historical memory (with the assistance of the promulgation of the 'accepted' historical narrative of Islamic orthodoxy), the significance of the different qur'anic recensions faded—leaving the reality of the sacrality of the received text. And, while Islamic tradition came to accept the

[38] For a comprehensive account of the Muslim traditions on the compilation of the Qur'an, see C. Gilliot, 'Les traditions sur la composition/coordination du Coran (*ta'līf al-Qur'ān*), in C. Gilliot and T. Nagel, eds, *Das Prophetenḥadīṯ: Dimensionen einer islamischen Literaturgattung*, Göttingen, 2004, pp. 14-39.

varying traditions on the collection and codification of the Qurʾan, and even 'the occasions of revelation', until today, the inimitable style of the qurʾanic text cannot be challenged.

Conclusion

The strength and nature of al-Kindī's attack on the Qurʾan (and Muḥammad) is unique among Christian Arabic apologies. His overt attack on Islam stands out in stark relief when compared with the nuanced defense of Christianity on the part of his contemporary Theodore Abū Qurra. But the different tones should not mask the similarities of the arguments of the two Christian protagonists: while the Christian Arab ventured into the realm of the debate of the *ʿijāz al-Qurʾān* and critiqued its use of the Arabic language, both texts we have examined evince varying degrees of familiarity with Muslim traditions concerning the collection and codification of Islam's holy book. Early Christian Arabic texts, despite their polemical intent, were far removed from the purview of what came to be Islamic orthodoxy. They may therefore provide valuable insight to the Arab/non-Arab and inter-Arab dynamics of the early Abbasid period. Furthermore, the ability of some Christians to speak of *kutub Allāh*, including therein the Christian reading and possibly 'corrupt' version of the Arabic Qurʾan, may shed light on the debates over the concept of scripture in this formative period for Islamic thought.

ʿAMMĀR AL-BASRĪ ON THE ALLEGED CORRUPTION OF THE GOSPELS

MARK BEAUMONT

In the first half of the ninth century ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī mounted an unparalleled defence of the authenticity of the Christian Gospels in the context of Abbasid rule. This Nestorian theologian produced two apologetic works, both of which deal with the Islamic charge that the Gospel had become corrupt in the hands of the followers of Christ. His shorter piece of writing *The Book of the Proof* has a section entitled 'Rejection of the accusation of the corruption of the Christian Scriptures' which is the fourth of twelve issues of controversy between Muslims and Christians.[1] His longer work, *The Book of Questions and Answers*, contains the most thorough treatment of the accusation of the corruption of the Gospels by any Christian writer up to his time.[2] *The Book of Questions and Answers* covers four issues; the Creator and the creation, the authenticity of the Gospels, the unity of God in Trinity, and the Incarnation. The second section, on the authenticity of the Gospels, has fourteen questions and answers and takes up twenty pages in Michel Hayek's edition. ʿAmmār's biographical details are unfortunately unavailable and his birth and death dates are unknown. One datable note about him comes from the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm which mentions that Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf wrote 'a book against ʿAmmār the Christian in

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[1] ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī, *'Kitāb al-burhān'*, in M. Hayek, ed.,*'Ammār al-Baṣrī: Apologie et Controverses*, Beirut, 1977, pp. 21-90.

[2] ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī, *'Kitāb al-masā'il wa-a-ajwiba'*, in Hayek, *'Ammār al-Baṣrī*, pp. 91-266. On ʿAmmār's theology generally see the articles of S. Griffith, 'The concept of *al-uqnūm* in ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī's apology for the doctrine of the Trinity', in S.K. Samir, ed., *Actes du premier congrès international d'études chrétiennes, Goslar, septembre 1980* (*Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 218), Rome, 1982, pp. 187-91; and "Ammār al-Baṣrī's *Kitāb al-burhān:* Christian *kalām* in the first Abbasid century', *Le Muséon* 96, 1983, pp. 145-81. For a treatment of ʿAmmār's Christology see M. Beaumont's article, "Ammār al-Baṣrī on the Incarnation', in D. Thomas, ed., *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule*, Leiden, 2003, pp. 55-62; and his longer discussion in his *Christology in Dialogue with Muslims*, Carlisle, 2005.

refutation of the Christians'.[3] Since Abū al-Hudhayl died around 224/840, ʿAmmār must have been active as a Christian apologist during the early decades of the third/ninth century.

Previous Christian references to the alleged corruption of the Christian scriptures are found in the writings of John of Damascus and the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I. John refers only to the fact that Muslims mistrust the prophetic predictions that Jesus was to be the Messiah, since they believe that the writings of the prophets have been tampered with. There is no mention of corruption of the Gospels themselves.[4] This might confirm the impression made by Q 3.78 and 7.162 that the Jews were guilty of corrupting their scriptures. Nevertheless, in 165/781-2 the Patriarch Timothy was faced with the accusation that Christians had corrupted the Gospel itself so that by then the qur'anic texts were being read to refer to Christians as well as Jews as evildoers among the People of the Book. (Q 7.162)[5]

During the encounter of Patriarch Timothy with the Caliph al-Mahdī, the latter accuses the Christians of removing references to Muḥammad from the Gospel that the Jews brought. 'Many proofs and testimonies existed in your books concerning Muḥammad but you corrupted your books and altered them.' Timothy asks: 'Where have you found that the Gospel is corrupted?' The Caliph gives no reply but Timothy confidently affirms: 'If I saw one prophecy in the Gospel about the coming of Muḥammad then I would leave the Gospel and follow the Qur'an.'[6]

At a later stage of the dialogue the Caliph returns to the allegation of corruption of the Gospel: 'If you did not change the Torah and the Gospel why do you not bear witness that Muḥammad is also

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[3] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kītāb al-fihrist*, ed. M. Riḍā-Tajaddud, Tehran, 1971, p. 204, trans. B. Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, New York, 1970, vol. I, p. 388.

[4] John of Damascus, 'The Heresy of the Ishmaelites', in D.J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam*, Leiden, 1972, 137. See M. Beaumont, 'Early Muslim interpretation of the Gospels', *Transformation* 22, 2005, pp. 20-7.

[5] Timothy mentions in a letter to a priest called Sargis in 782-3 that he had been invited by the Caliph to discuss Christian teaching. Since Timothy became Patriarch in 780, the encounter with al-Mahdī probably happened in 781. See Epistle 59 in *Les Lettres du Patriarche Nestorien Timothée I*, ed. R.J. Bidawid (*Studi e Testi* 186), Rome, 1956, pp. 42f.

[6] 'Dialogue between the Caliph al-Mahdī and the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I', in H. Putman, *L'église et l'Islam sous Timothée I (780-823)*, Beirut, 1975, appendix, p. 21.

among the prophets?' Timothy's reply tackles the implausibility of the Christians changing the Gospel given to them. Would they have retained the difficult aspects of the Gospels, such as the references to Christ's being afraid, or being beaten, or in pain, or crucified, or dead, if they had altered the Gospel account? 'We Christians did not change or corrupt one word of the book of God.'[7]

Evidently Muslim encounter with the Christian Gospels had produced an unease with the way they differed from the Gospel brought by Christ according to the Qur'an. From the Caliph's point of view, Jesus prophesied the coming of Muḥammad in Jn 14.17, 26 and 16.13-14 when he spoke of the Paraclete, but when Timothy pointed out that the Paraclete was the Spirit of God and not a human being, the Caliph accused Christians of distorting the reference to remove the prophecy concerning Muḥammad.[8] No other specific allegation of corruption is made by al-Mahdī in the dialogue, but one case of corruption could be enough to undermine the reliability of those who transmitted the Christian Gospels.

ʿAmmār never mentions al-Mahdī's charge that Christians deliberately removed prophecies of Muḥammad's coming from their Gospels. It is entirely possible that he was familiar with Timothy's dialogue since he and Timothy were from the same denomination. But it seems that he prefers to deal with the allegation of Christian corruption of the Gospels in a more general way. For ʿAmmār the allegation needs to be dealt with indirectly in order to show the impossibility of the charge. He employs a *reductio ad absurdum* style of argumentation to demonstrate that any allegation of deliberate corruption on the part of Christians was absurd. ʿAmmār's only reference to a possibly corrupt text in the Gospels comes in his treatment of the Incarnation in *The Book of Questions and Answers*. Question forty-three, out of fifty-one questions on the Incarnation, is: 'How could Jesus command his disciples to baptise people in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Isn't this text evidence of the corruption (*taḥrīf*) of the message of Christ by Christians?' ʿAmmār replies that Christ had claimed a relationship of equality with the Father elsewhere in the Gospels so the Trinitarian text was

[7] Ibid., p. 26.
[8] Ibid., p. 21.

not inconsistent with other parts of Christ's teaching.[9]

This glimpse into Muslim Gospel criticism shows the kind of debate that was occurring in the early third/ninth century as Muslims combed the Gospels for data that would on the one hand confirm the qur'anic portrait of Christ, and on the other indicate the way that Christians had edited the original in deviant ways. Evidence for this way of handling the Gospels comes from al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm's *Refutation of the Christians*, written possibly as a result of debate with Christians in Egypt between 199/815 and 210/826.[10] Al-Qāsim accepts that the Gospels contain much authentic material, but implies that Christians have departed from the true meaning of the Gospels in their creeds. Thus he concedes that Muslims and Christians 'both find in the four Gospels a variety of witnesses. We both accept the knowledge found in the four Gospels.'[11] However, his interpretation of the sonship of Christ depends on isolating particular texts that indicate that the disciples are sons of the heavenly father. 'The testimony of Christ to his disciples was that they were all sons of the Father. If God was the Father of all of them then it demonstrates that the interpretation of fatherhood and sonship is not what you Christians say in your teaching.'[12] Yet when al-Qāsim proceeds to quote extensively from the Gospel of Matthew he edits out the original references of Jesus to God as Father. So the Lord's Prayer opens: 'Our Lord who art in heaven'.[13] Throughout his version of the Sermon on the Mount al-Qāsim renders 'Father in heaven' as 'God' or 'Lord'. The climactic warning of Jesus that, despite people calling him Lord, preaching in his name, casting out demons, and performing miracles, he will tell some who did not truly obey him to get out of his sight, is turned by al-Qāsim into a meeting not between disciples and Jesus, but disciples and God. 'Then God will say to them on that day, "Get away from me evildoers."'[14]

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[9] 'Ammār, *'Kitāb al-masā'il wa-a-ajwiba'*, p. 249. See Beaumont, *Christology in Dialogue with Muslims*, pp. 67-92.

[10] See D. Thomas, 'The Bible in early Muslim anti-Christian polemic', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 7, 1996, pp. 29-38.

[11] Al-Qāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm, *Al-radd 'alā al-Naṣārā*, ed. I. de Matteo, 'Confutazione contro i Cristiani dello Zaydita al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm', *Revista degli Studi Orientali* 9, 1921-2, [pp. 301-31] p. 321.

[12] Ibid., p. 324.

[13] Ibid., p. 328.

[14] Ibid., p. 330.

It was easy enough for al-Qāsim to challenge the unique sonship of Christ found in the Gospels if he was ready to edit them to suit his interpretation. He was doubtless not the only Muslim to interpret the Gospels in an Islamic way, but his reading shows how Christians were now faced with Islamic Gospel criticism of a kind they had not seen before. The irony of al-Qāsim's removal of 'Father in heaven' from the Sermon on the Mount is, of course, that it is in the Lord's prayer that he had evidence for the corporate sonship of Christ's disciples, and he undermined the strength of his interpretation by fleeing from the idea of God as Father altogether. Still, the idea that Christ did not claim a unique sonship in the four Gospels was central to al-Qāsim's argument, and was followed by other Muslims who entered into debate with Christians in the period. Al-Mahdī, while not quoting extensively from the Gospels in his audience with Timothy, chooses Jn 20.17: 'I am going to my God and your God', and Matt 26.39: 'Jesus prayed prostrating himself before God', to argue that Jesus saw himself as equal to his disciples in sonship and subordinate to God, rather than equal to him. Al-Mahdī can then point out to Timothy that 'if Christ prayed prostrating himself, he is not divine, and if he were divine he would not have prayed prostrating himself.'[15] Thus, already by the end of the second/eighth century Muslims were in the habit of culling texts from the Gospels to support an Islamic understanding of Christ, and either to ignore or to edit out texts that seemed to speak of Christ's equality of status with God. So when Timothy quoted Matthew 28.19 to al-Mahdī: 'Make disciples of all nations and baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit', the Caliph wonders how Christ could have said such a thing.[16] The obvious implication of al-Mahdī's reaction is that Matt 26.39 is authentic while Matt 28.19 is not. This is made explicit in ʿAmmār's discussion of Matt 28.19 already referred to, where the allegation of corruption is made with respect to the saying.

By the early third/ninth century, then, Muslims were alleging that Christians had distorted the contents of their Gospels either in terms of misunderstanding of the text or by deliberate alteration

[15] *'Dialogue between the Caliph al-Mahdī and the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I'*, appendix, p. 21.

[16] Ibid., appendix, p. 15.

of the original. ʿAmmār's approach to these allegations is to defend the Gospels as original and authentic by showing that allegations of corruption of meaning or text were ultimately absurd. His arguments in *The Book of the Proof* will by examined first.

The Book of the Proof

In his shorter work ʿAmmār makes five points in defence of the authenticity of the Gospels. Firstly, the Gospels could not have been corrupted after the first preaching of the Gospel, but must correspond to the message Christ's disciples brought. Secondly, if it is alleged that Christians altered the message given by the preachers, how could they have reached agreement on the proposed alterations? Thirdly, if it is said that the Roman emperor provided corrupt Gospels and forced them on people, how could he have done this when many of his subjects were not Christians? Fourthly, if various rulers forced corrupt Gospels on their people, how could they have agreed on the corrupted texts? Finally, those who say that the Christians have only corrupted the meaning of the Gospels but not the text cannot be right because the teaching of the Gospels is so contrary to what the Qurʾan says about the Gospel.

The first argument depends on the impact that the first Christian preachers made on their audience. They preached a message that was accompanied by signs and wonders which authenticated the message for those that responded to it. It is inconceivable that the very people who accepted the message should afterwards change it in any way. 'As the message was accepted by means of the force of the signs, no corruption would have been accepted after the message became deeply rooted in people's hearts.'[17] This is an argument based on psychological probability. Those who were profoundly moved by the preachers of the new message would be the very last people to think of altering that message. On the contrary, such bonding between preacher and convert normally means that the converts are altogether faithful to every last word of the preacher.

The second argument stresses the implausibility of Christians being able to reach agreement on the corrupted texts. After all, the

[17] ʿAmmār, *'Kītāb al-burhān'*, p. 42.

fact that Christians disagree about the interpretation of the same text demonstrates how agreement among Christians is not easily achieved; 'Their differences in interpretation show the impossibility of the accusation against them that they agreed to corrupt the revealed scriptures.'[18] Here the division of Christians into several denominations that shared exactly the same texts of the Gospels gave ʿAmmār the perfect illustration for the authenticity of the text despite variety in its interpretation.

Thirdly, it might be alleged that a powerful leader such as the Roman emperor made the alterations and forced the corrupted text on his subjects. However, history does not support this. Christians died for the message of the Gospels so how could they have given their lives for a message invented by the emperor? In any case, the Gospels exist in several languages, so how could the Roman emperor be indicted in a court of law for producing a corrupt text in one language, when the various linguistic versions all agree? 'Surely a court would acquit the Roman emperor of changing his Gospel as a result of the witness of all the Gospels in many languages that were not in his hands and had not been subjected to his teaching, since they agree with it and it agrees with them in wording?'[19] Blaming the Roman Emperor shows a disregard for the actual course of events and lack of intellectual rigour.

Fourthly, the some applies to any allegation that rulers forced corrupt Gospels on their people. This is simply absurd. It means that the various versions in different languages had to be corrupted at the same time and place. ʿAmmār pokes fun at his opponent for such a suggestion: 'Where did they gather together? And in which of their kingdoms? For there is no doubt that they all met together in the kingdom of one of the kings. So who was he? And how did they trust each other, and how did each one commit himself to the other?'[20] Disregard for historical plausibility is at the heart of such allegations.

The fifth argument relates to a different type of alleged corruption. Some Muslims do not say that the Christians corrupted the text of their Gospels but only that they corrupted the meaning of the

[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., p. 43.
[20] Ibid.

words. This argument is based on the theory that the message of the four Gospels accords with what the Qur'an says about the Gospel that Christ brought. ʿAmmār highlights material in the Gospels that clearly contradicts the teaching of the Qur'an to prove discord rather than harmony between the Gospels and the Qur'an.

> The Gospel commands that we baptise people in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and announces that the Word is eternal and divine, by whom everything was created, and that the Spirit is the Lord, and that there will be no marriage, food or drink in the hereafter… See if your book agrees with any of this.[21]

ʿAmmār proceeds to outline the teaching of the Qur'an on these points.

> Concerning the Father, you do not know him by your denial of the Son. Concerning the Spirit, you say the spirit is from the Lord whereas God's book says that the Spirit is the Lord. Concerning the Word you say the Word is created whereas the Gospel says the Word is eternal and is God. Concerning marriage, eating, and drinking in the hereafter, you hold to them whereas the Gospel annuls them. So how can the Gospel be altered to the meaning of your book? That is not at all possible.[22]

In the final analysis, ʿAmmār drives home the incongruity of the Gospel and the Qur'an. 'The futility of your speech is increased by the evidence.'[23] Therefore the allegation that Christians have a sound text but cannot understand it accurately is even more absurd than the allegation that they corrupted the text itself.

ʿAmmār's arguments in context

ʿAmmār's last argument that Christians did not simply misinterpret the Gospel can be compared with al-Qāsim's basic concern to accept a good deal of the Christian Gospels as authentic. The fact that virtually the whole of the Sermon on the Mount is quoted by him with approval is a signal of Muslim attempts to accept Christian material that was not in obvious conflict with the teaching of the Qur'an.

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[21] Ibid., p. 45.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

Al-Qāsim is a good example of the kind of Muslim that wanted to separate Christians from false interpretations of their Gospels by getting them to attend to their Gospels more accurately. However, as we have seen, al-Qāsim had to edit out from the Sermon aspects that might be contradictory to qur'anic teaching. So not only did he remove references to God as Father, but he also omitted Christ's teaching about divorce in Matt 5.27-32.[24] It cannot be argued that al-Qāsim forgot to insert it since he reports the Sermon in the order given by Matthew. So, hidden behind the notion that Christians merely misunderstood their Gospels is the more serious idea that the Gospels actually do contain material that is not supported by the clear teaching of the Qur'an. ʿAmmār was quick to bring out this reality by emphasising Gospel texts that teach the equal status of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and a different picture of the hereafter from that given in the Qur'an.

The fact that ʿAmmār deals mostly with the allegation of a corrupt text accords with the situation in which Christians found themselves. Already in the debate between al-Mahdī and Timothy, the Muslim difficulty with the Christian Gospels is the lack of agreement between them and the Qur'an. Christ does not explicitly prophesy the coming of Muḥammad as he should, and it is inconceivable that he could talk about baptism in the name of the Trinity. The Gospels both lack key qur'anic teaching and affirm things that the Qur'an denies. The stubborn testimony of Matt 28.19 to a Trinitarian formula was obviously an important debating point in the late second/eighth and early third/ninth centuries, since both Timothy and ʿAmmār appealed to it.

Where ʿAmmār strikes out on his own is in his appeals to psychology and history in defence of the authenticity of the Gospels. How could awestruck converts pervert the message that had turned them upside down? How could human beings be so gullible as to accept a text invented by their ruler? In any case, from a historical point of view, when and where could the invented text have been assembled? The Roman emperor simply would not have been disposed to it since he was both antagonistic to Christians and incapable of producing a text in one language alone. There is a post-Enlightenment quality to these concerns which gives ʿAmmār's arguments a modern feel.

[24] Al-Qāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm, *Radd*, p. 327.

However, the post-Enlightenment concern with the Jesus of history over against the Christ of the Church's faith was not congenial to Christians in 'Ammār's period. Muslims were making a very similar kind of critical analysis of the Gospels to those made by Western Christians in the last two centuries. However, Michel Hayek may well be right in saying that these five pages of *The Book of the Proof* are 'finer than any that are to be found in subsequent apologetic literature'.[25]

The Book of Questions and Answers

'Ammār's longer treatment of 'the reliability of the holy Gospel' is written in interrogative style with questions from a representative Muslim and answers from a representative Christian. After the Christian has established that the Creator sent messengers with a message of his kindness accompanied by signs and wonders, the Muslim asks how people could do what God required of them in the light of these messengers; to which the Christian replies that the Gospel was disseminated as a book among many nations. The Muslim then asks how these nations could be sure that the book represented what God had revealed through the messengers and the signs and wonders that they had performed, when the nations were not witnesses to the messengers themselves. By way of reply the Christian points to the teaching of Christ in the book as confirmation that he was sent by the Creator. His sayings 'love your enemies, and bless those who curse you, and do good to those who do evil to you, and pray for those who drive you from your countries', and 'as you desire something to be done to you so do to everyone', enabled people to live the way the Creator wanted. The Muslim wondered whether Christians had put these words on Christ's lips to 'attract people to obeying them without God having revealed or commanded them'.[26] The Christian launches into a long discourse on the manner of revelation, its hidden and revealed aspects, and how people can be sure that the transcendent God has made known his word and will. Christ himself referred to the kingdom of heaven as both

[25] Hayek, *'Ammār al-Baṣrī*, p. 52.
[26] 'Ammār, *'Kītāb al-masā'il wa-l-ajwiba'*, p. 130.

hidden and revealed when he compared it to a mustard seed. So his religion may have appeared small but one day would be great, hidden in the ground but one day revealed for many nations to see and experience. But the Muslim presses the point that many people have books that they claim are revelation but they contradict each other. How can anyone know where true revelation is to be found? On what principles? Surely not simply by the assertion of the truth of the teaching contained in them?

According to the Christian, there are six principles that are to be applied to this issue. If any of the six characteristics they identify are found in a book that claims to be revelation, it can be regarded as faulty. The same kind of appeal to the characteristics of a true religion is found in ʿAmmār's *Book of the Proof* but not in the section on the accusation of corruption. There, ʿAmmār's six principles are applied to the verification of religions, but here they are applied to the verification of religious texts. The Melkite apologist Theodore Abū Qurra (d. c. 214/830) also appeals to similar marks of a true religion in his substantial *Treatise on the True Religion,* but never uses them to defend the authenticity of the Gospels.[27] Thus ʿAmmār is alone among known Christian writers of the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries in re-using a shared apologetic tradition concerned with the establishment of a true religion to defend the Christian scriptures.

Six characteristics of inauthentic religious texts

Firstly, they permit what God has forbidden; secondly, they are forced on people by the sword; thirdly, they are promoted by financial inducements; fourthly, they are believed in out of ethnic loyalty; fifthly, they are believed in as a result of magic arts; sixthly, they are promoted by rulers and so accepted. Debate between the Christian and the Muslim subsequently revolves around these six characteristics.

1. They permit what God has forbidden

The Muslim questions whether the Gospels exempt people from

[27] See I. Dick, *Théodore Abuqurra: Traité de l'existence du Créateur et de la vraie réligion,* Jounieh, 1982.

some of God's laws. The opposite is actually the case with the teaching of Christ, claims the Christian. Christ in fact made the laws of God stricter then many people would like. He said: 'Whoever divorces his wife and takes another woman has committed adultery, and whoever forsakes his wife without her committing adultery has sinned greatly.' Therefore, Christ forbade any man from taking a woman other than his wife. Christ said: 'Buy what you can acquire in the earth and give it as charity to the poor.' Clearly, Christ was not making the laws of God easy to fulfil. The Christian ends with the challenging question: 'Do you consider these to be concessions and a means of attracting gullible people to a false religion?'[28]

2. They are forced on people by the sword

The Muslim suggests that people might have accepted the Gospel because Christianity was actually propagated by force. The Christian is quick to point out that Christ told his apostles not to carry weapons when they went out to preach. 'I am sending you out as lambs among wolves. So go out and do not take on your mission a club or stick'. So his disciples did exactly as he had instructed them. 'If they had intended to conquer people by a sword, then why would they agree to take up a club or a stick that they had been forbidden to?'[29]

3. They are promoted by financial inducements

So, says the Muslim, they may have done the opposite by buying favour with their hearers. The Christian promptly quotes further testimony of Christ given to his apostles: 'Do not take gold or silver.' It is inconceivable that the disciples could have offered any money or bribe to have their message accepted.

4. They are believed in out of ethnic loyalty

Perhaps, suggests the Muslim, people accepted Christianity out of loyalty to their leaders who had embraced the religion and promoted it among them. The Christian protests that this argument might apply if only one ethnic group had become Christians, but in reality many different types of people from several nations and languages embraced the Gospel. Added to this international collec-

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[28] *'Kītāb al-masā'il wa-a-ajwiba'*, pp. 139f.
[29] Ibid., p. 140.

tion of Christians is the strange fact that they all worship a crucified Jew which is amazing, considering the general hatred these nations had for Jews in particular. So ethnic loyalty seems the last reason for becoming a Christian.

5. They are believed in as a result of magic arts

Could the signs and wonders accompanying the preaching not be compared to magic arts, asks the Muslim. Certainly, Christ commanded his apostles to 'drive out demons and heal the sick by my name', replies the Christian. Now if they had been unable to perform these wonders and had misled people by trickery and magic, why have so many men of science and medicine been led to accept them as genuine signs and wonders? These are the very people who know how to distinguish between the futility of magic and real miracles.

6. They are promoted by rulers and so accepted

The Muslim then argues that perhaps the common people accepted the signs without investigating then in a scientific way, and many were led to accept Christianity simply out of submission to their leaders. The Christian appeals to the fact that people from many nations accepted the truth of the signs along with the message. 'How is it possible for thirty different kingdoms to agree to accept these difficult and detestable things and to neglect to examine the preachers of them?' Surely when the disciples healed someone, people would have investigated whether it had actually happened. If the disciples had not healed, people 'would not believe one word of their book'.[30]

ʿAmmār concludes his defence by returning to the accusation that the apostles invented the teachings of Christ. The Muslim wonders if the preachers used financial incentives and the sword and then covered this up by making Christ teach that they should not take money or a club on their mission. The Christian appeals once more to psychological probability: 'If their confession of faith was, as you allege, different from their deeds done beforehand then why did people accept their book?' Rational human beings are not as easily influenced as dim-witted animals. 'They are not ignorant of what any cheat or deceiver invents.'[31] When we examine other sacred texts

[30] Ibid., pp. 142f.
[31] Ibid., pp. 144f.

like the Torah, the scriptures of the Manicheans, and the Qurʾan we find there is no contradiction between the written testimony and the practice of the bringers of the books. As far as the Qurʾan is concerned 'if the one who was sent to proclaim his religion to the people differed in his actions and his faith from his proclamation and the laws in his book, then when the people accepted his religion they would not have professed his book.'[32] Since Muslims claim that their book has been copied faithfully throughout the many Muslim nations and is without corruption, this simply backs up the Christian claim that the Gospels were transmitted faithfully among the nations.

ʿAmmār's arguments in context

In order to defend the first Christians from the charge that they perverted the teaching of Christ, ʿAmmār seeks in *The Book of Questions and Answers* systematically to remove any possibility of their doing so. By appealing to the notion of inauthentic religious books he is able to show point by point that the Gospels do not share their characteristics. Inauthentic books relaxed the strict tenor of God's laws but the Gospels make the laws of Christ very demanding indeed. If anything, they seem to be too strict. Christ did not allow the use of financial inducements or the sword in the promotion of his religion. Love for enemies, and a man being faithful to one wife and not seeking divorce, take the teaching of the Gospels beyond what Muslims believe to be the law of God, so they cannot accuse Christians of relaxing God's laws. ʿAmmār, by implication, chooses to put the pressure on Muslims to show why the Qurʾan is not guilty of relaxing the laws of Christ. Now it is significant that ʿAmmār never questions the authenticity of the Qurʾan directly, so this pressure on Muslims is indirect. If they elect to use arguments against the Gospels, they must be willing to apply the same criteria in examining their own religion. Thus, if it is a characteristic of inauthentic religions that they make the laws of God easy, how does Islam compare with Christianity? Does Islam not in its own way make the law of God easy? But this way of explicitly asking the question is absent from ʿAmmār's work. Given the constraints

[32] Ibid., p. 145.

of living under Abbasid rule, Christians needed to use the language of implication rather than that of counter-attack.

ʿAmmār's appeal to the impossibility of a variety of ethnic groups being taken in by a false Gospel also implicitly questions the way Islam was promoted. He emphasises that although the distribution of the Gospels was in a variety of languages their contents were the same. No one powerful ruler could enforce these disparate texts. Without saying so explicitly, ʿAmmār shows that the promotion of the Qur'an in one language by powerful rulers may raise questions about the authenticity of the Muslim text. Again, his framing of the debate on Islamic presuppositions of the promotion of religious truth is carefully nuanced to show weaknesses at the heart of the Muslim claim to authenticity for the Qur'an. Christianity spread without political power and its linguistic control. By implication, Islam has a case to answer that Christianity does not. However, ʿAmmār chooses not to counter-attack but rather to reduce Muslim allegations of corruption to absurdity. Psychology and history were on the side of the Gospels and Christians, he seems to suggest, could afford to be quietly strong in the face of implausible arguments by Muslims.

Conclusion

It can be seen that ʿAmmār's defence of the authenticity of the Gospels was more extensive than comparable treatments by any of his known Christian contemporaries in the early Abbasid period. He formed his arguments in the context of two possible accusations of 'corruption' of the Christian scriptures, either that Christians misinterpreted the authentic Gospel brought by Christ, or that they had altered what Christ had given them. The detailed attention he paid to Muslim allegations that Christians had altered the text of their Gospels demonstrates that this was a more pressing problem than the accusation of misinterpretation. His appeals to history and psychology to defend the accuracy of Christian reporting of the teaching of Christ were particularly pertinent to debates with Muslims in his era, and they retain enduring value for Christians who engage in dialogue with Muslims.

THE USE AND TRANSLATION OF SCRIPTURE IN THE APOLOGETIC WRITINGS OF ABŪ RĀʾIṬA AL-TAKRĪTĪ

SANDRA KEATING

Introduction

The Christian community living under Abbasid rule in the early ninth century witnessed a number of profound changes that were to have lasting effects on church life. Among the more significant of these was the establishment of Arabic as the official language of the empire, along with other policies encouraging conversion to Islam. This situation soon demanded of Christian theologians a careful response to Muslim questions, as well as clear formulations and explanations of Christian doctrines in light of the confrontation with Islamic assertions. It is also within this context that one finds the beginnings of systematic translation of the Bible into Arabic.

There has long been a debate among scholars over how early extensive Arabic translations of parts of the Bible existed and how widespread their usage was. Given the evidence available to date, however, it seems unlikely that, apart from a few scattered pre-Islamic sacred inscriptions in Arabic, any significant Christian writings were translated until after the rise of Islam.[1] The earliest known Arabic translations of biblical texts are those found in manuscripts predominantly from Mar Sabas and St Catherine's monasteries that can be dated around the beginning of the ninth century. At this time, nearly all the New Testament, including the Gospels, was translated first in the Melkite church for liturgical and apologetic uses.[2] Yet, only a limited number of texts from the Old Testament, notably the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach and Psalm 79, are known to have

[1] Most of the manuscripts that were thought to have been earlier translations have now been positively dated much later; A. Vööbus, *Early Versions of the New Testament: Manuscript Studies* (*Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile* 6), Stockholm, 1954, pp. 271-7.

[2] S.H. Griffith, 'The Gospel in Arabic: an inquiry into its appearance in the first Abbasid century', *Oriens Christianus* 69, 1985, [pp. 126-67] 128.

been rendered into Arabic by the early ninth century.[3] This may account for the fact that biblical citations found in Muslim writings in the early period are often taken completely out of context and appear with no reference to what immediately precedes or follows them. Arabic-speakers, it seems, did not have access to more complete translations of the Old Testament, apart from a few verses circulated in Christian apologetical texts.[4]

The writings that probably provided the sources for such citations were those beginning to be produced by apologists such as Theodore Abū Qurra, the Melkite Bishop of Ḥarrān, and the Jacobite Abū Rā'iṭa al-Takrītī, along with numerous other lesser-known and anonymous authors. These writers had now found themselves confronting a new situation in which the faithful from their ancient churches were rapidly converting to a rival religion for what they regarded in many cases as dubious reasons.[5] This was a result of social and economic pressure, as well as religious conviction. In both formal and informal settings, Muslims and Christians were apparently engaged in direct discussion and literary debate over the criteria for the 'true religion'. For their part, Muslim interlocutors were motivated by the demand of the Qur'an that Christians produce a *burhān* (Q 2.111; 28.75), a 'proof' that their religion was truly from God and had not been altered or manipulated by human interference. In response, Christian theologians turned to traditional apologetic approaches involving rational arguments supported by biblical proof texts. However, as we shall see, the new context demanded that these methods be transformed to meet the unique challenge of Islam.

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[3] Ibid., pp. 131-4; see also idem, 'The monks of Palestine and the growth of Christian literature in Arabic', *The Muslim World* 78, 1988, pp. 1-28.

[4] H. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism,* Princeton NJ, 1992, p. 118.

[5] See for example Abū Rā'iṭa's list of unacceptable reasons to convert to another religion, which reveal an implicit, yet strong critique of Islam, *Proof,* 2-10, in S.T. Keating, *Defending the 'People of Truth' in the Early Islamic Period: The Christian Apologies of Abū Rāi'ṭah* (*The History of Christian-Muslim Relations* 4), Leiden, 2006.

Ḥabīb ibn Khidma Abū Rā'iṭa al-Takrītī

Within the so-called Jacobite (Syrian Orthodox) Church, it was Ḥabīb ibn Khidma Abū Rā'iṭa al-Takrītī (d. ca 220/835) who took up the problem of answering questions raised by Muslims for his fellow Christians, producing at least four lengthy texts (one of which is now lost) on various relevant topics. In addition, he created a separate collection of verses from the Old Testament to be used for apologetic and catechetical purposes. For reasons that will be outlined below, Abū Rā'iṭa does not simply reproduce the work of past apologists, nor does he place scriptural proof texts at the center of his apologetic enterprise, as many of his predecessors did. Rather, he very carefully employs scripture in a multitude of ways to argue for and substantiate his points both to Muslims and to beleaguered Christians. This leads him to produce original renderings in Arabic of the biblical passages found throughout his works well before such systematic translations had been made.

To understand better the purpose and motivation underlying Abū Rā'iṭa's project, it is useful from the outset to identify the role he filled in his own milieu. The eastern churches, particularly the Coptic Church, have traditionally held Abū Rā'iṭa to be a bishop, although to date there is no concrete evidence that this is true.[6] Rather, it is likely that he held a position similar to what was known as a *malpônô* in the Nestorian church at this time and would develop later among the Jacobites. This ecclesiastical rank had a parallel in the Armenian *vardapet*, an epithet associated with Abū Rā'iṭa in a number of contemporary Armenian texts.[7] The position of *malpônô*/*vardapet* was

[6] The most developed summaries of the available evidence are found in J.-M. Fiey, 'Ḥabīb Abū Rā'iṭa n'était pas évêque de Takrīt', in S.K. Samir, ed., *Actes du deuxième congrès international d'études arabes chrétiennes (Oosterhesselen, septembre 1984)* (*Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 226), Rome, 1986, pp. 211-14; and in my unpublished dissertation, 'Dialog between Muslims and Christians in the Early Ninth Century: The Example of Ḥabīb ibn Khidma Abū Rā'iṭa al-Takrītī's Theology of the Trinity', Catholic University of America, 2001, pp. 23-33.

[7] One of the few details known about Abū Rā'iṭa is his invitation from the Armenian Prince Ashot Msaker (d. 211/826) to debate with Theodore Abū Qurra. Although Abū Rā'iṭa declined and instead sent his nephew, the Archdeacon Nonnus of Nisibis, his involvement in this incident is mentioned in several Armenian chronicles. R.W. Thomson, *The Historical Compilation of Vardan Arewel'ci* (*Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 43), Washington DC, 1989, p. 183; J. Muyldermans, *La domination arabe en Arménie: Extrait de l'Histoire Universelle de Vardan*, Armenian text, Paris/Louvain, 1927, p. 60; M.-F.

that of an independent theologian, scholar and teacher, and required extensive knowledge of scripture, exegesis, and church doctrine.[8] The *vardapet* also sometimes acted as an unordained consultant to members of the clergy. If it is indeed the case that Abū Rā'iṭa held such a position, this would explain the account of his presence at the Synod of Rash ʿAina in 212(213)/827(828) in spite of the fact that according to the Syriac chronicles he did not directly participate.[9] This is also consistent with the obvious intention of several of his extant writings to provide advice for clergy, perhaps even bishops, although there is no record that he himself was ordained.

In light of this, the purpose and context of Abū Rā'iṭa's writings that address the Muslim challengers of Christianity become clearer. Among Abū Rā'iṭa's primary obligations as a *malpônô* would have been to respond to the crises in the church of his day by arming priests and bishops with the intellectual weapons necessary to defend their flocks. Arguably, the greatest crisis at the turn of the ninth century was the increasing influence of Arabic and Islamic teachings over every aspect of life. This dual incursion necessitated the translation of biblical texts into Arabic, along with a creative use of traditional proof texts in his apologetic writings. One sees clearly throughout Abū Rā'iṭa's writings a double intent—firstly, to give confidence to the Christians of his Jacobite community that their faith and tradition was well-grounded in the 'true religion', and secondly, to provide evidence that might be used to convince Muslims that Christian teaching is not incoherent or based on falsified scriptures. Support for this can be found in the fact that although Abū Rā'iṭa wrote his apologies in Arabic, he addressed them to other Christians who at this time were just gaining fluency in the

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Brosset, trans., *Histoire chronologique par Mkhithar d'Aïrivank*, Mémoires de l'Académie impériale des sciences de St Petersburg, 7e série, t. 13, fasc. 5, St Petersburg, 1869, p. 83.

[8] R.W. Thomson, 'Vardapet in the early Armenian Church', *Le Muséon* 75, 1962, pp. 367-82. The Canons of Ḥenānā use the term *malpônô* for those teachers who are of high rank in the School of Nisibis. In some manuscripts, it designates those of the highest rank, while in others it is applied to teachers in general; see A. Vööbus, *The Statutes of the School of Nisibis*, Stockholm, 1962, esp. p. 93, n. 15, and *History of the School of Nisibis* (*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 255, *Subsidia* 26), Louvain, 1965, esp. p. 325.

[9] Michael the Syrian, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioch (1166-1199)*, ed. and trans. J.-B. Chabot, Paris, 1899-1910, vol. III, p. 50, vol. IV, p. 507.

language of their rulers. This makes the writings both more useful for Christians engaged in conversation with Muslims, and more accessible to arabophones with no competency in Syriac or Greek. Within this apologetic context, the translation of useful scriptural texts becomes a high priority.

Scriptural citations in the texts

What is immediately apparent from a quick perusal of Abū Rā'iṭa's extant writings is that the approach of his apologies does not rely primarily on scriptural proof texts, but rather on rational arguments drawn from the principles of logic. I have argued elsewhere that the motivation for Abū Rā'iṭa's dependence on rational arguments arises out of a desire to counter the charge based in the Qur'an that Christians and Jews have in their possession scriptures that have been altered. Thus, according to the Muslim questioners, wherever the Bible contradicts the Qur'an (e.g. concerning the divinity of Jesus), the latter corrects earlier distortions of the scriptures, be they intentional or not. As a consequence, this allegation of textual corruption, *taḥrīf,* places the burden squarely on the Christian apologist of finding common ground on which to make convincing arguments for the truth of Christianity, and necessitates a move away from traditional apologetic approaches based on scripture. In doing this, Abū Rā'iṭa takes advantage of the increasing interest of ninth-century Muslim scholars in Hellenistic philosophy to make arguments based on reason and logic, and to lead his opponents to recognize the coherence of Christian doctrines.[10]

Nonetheless, one does find groups of scriptural passages employed as proof texts in nearly all his writings, and it is clear that he sees biblical support for the doctrines he is seeking to explicate as crucial. Abū Rā'iṭa undoubtedly does not want to abandon scripture as a useful apologetic tool. One can suggest at least two reasons for this. First, to do so might give credence to the accusation of *taḥrīf* and encourage suspicions that perhaps the charge has some validity. This

[10] S. T. Keating, 'Refuting the charge of *taḥrīf*: Abu Rā'iṭah (d. ca. 835 CE) and his first *risāla* on the Holy Trinity', in S. Günter, ed., *Ideas, Images, and Methods of Portrayal: Insights into Classical Arabic Literature and Islam*, Leiden, 2005, pp. 41-57.

would be problematic for the case he presents both to Muslims and to fellow Christians. Second, Abū Rā'iṭa intends his apologies to lend support to the flagging faith of his Christian readers. Consequently, he utilizes scripture passages in his writings as further evidence for arguments he has developed using other methods, as well as to encourage perseverance and confidence of his co-religionists in the truth of Christianity. Whereas his Muslim readers might not accept all of the biblical proof texts, his Christian readers do.

Scriptural citations and references are found in all of Abū Rā'iṭa's major writings, but of particular interest here are those employed in his apologetic works concerning Muslim questions.[11] Three of his works explicitly concerned with disputation with Muslims, *Proof of the Christian Religion*, the *First Risāla on the Holy Trinity*, and the *Second Risāla on the Incarnation*, contain groups of verses from the Bible following an identifiable pattern which is outlined below. A fourth text, *Witnesses from the Words of the Torah, the Prophets and the Saints*, can credibly be connected to Abū Rā'iṭa's other apologetic exercises, and indeed may have some significance of its own as a so-called *testimonia* collection.[12]

In general, one can recognize a basic structure in the three longer *rasā'il* (*Holy Trinity, Incarnation* and *Proof*)[13] that underlies Abū Rā'iṭa's approach to the challenges presented by his context. Each *risāla* begins with an introduction identifying the purpose of the text at hand that includes biblical passages generally drawn from the New Testament. These verses are clearly intended to give confidence to Christians facing questions raised by Muslims about their beliefs. The introduction is followed by a logical demonstration of the doctrine(s) in question, which is organized in a question and answer format. At the conclusion of most of the larger sections of the *rasā'il* are lists of useful scriptural proof texts.[14]

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[11] For a brief introduction and English translation of these texts, see my *Defending*.

[12] I am grateful to Mark Swanson for drawing my attention to the work that has already been done on *testimonia* collections and the potential importance of *Witnesses* in light of this.

[13] The literary form of *rasā'il* (letter-treatises) is significant here. Although the texts claim to be written to a particular, if unnamed, person, they are intended for a much wider audience. As a consequence, I am including *Proof* among them, even though it does not entirely follow the *risāla* form.

[14] Those of Abū Rā'iṭa's writings intent on refuting the Melkites and defending the teachings of the Jacobites follow this same general pattern, but generally include proof

Within this given structure, three different treatments of scriptural texts can be identified. First, several texts (taken especially from Matthew and Luke) are intended primarily to remind the Christian reader of God's help and support, and to console those who may be losing heart in the face of pressure to abandon their faith. For example, the opening of the *Risāla on the Holy Trinity* includes citations from Luke (12.4-5) and Matthew (5.42, 10.19) in which Jesus tells his disciples not to fear and to trust that God will provide the necessary words when his followers are asked to give witness. In the *Proof of the Christian Religion*, one finds numerous references to passages in Matthew and Luke explaining the Christian calling to lead a simple life, to find strength in God, etc.,[15] presented as arguments against those temptations to fulfil worldly desires made licit in the other, unnamed religion of Islam.

Two observations should be made about these verses found in the introductions of the *rasā'il*. First, they are all taken from the New Testament, which Abū Rā'iṭa generally uses very sparingly. The references from Matthew and Luke just mentioned account for more than a third of all New Testament citations found in his extant writings. This is notable in light of Abū Rā'iṭa's reliance on the Old Testament for proof texts nearly twice as much throughout his apologies. The explanation for his use of these particular citations in the introductory sections of the *rasā'il* can be found in his expected audience. In contrast to the main portion of the texts, which are intended to engage Muslim interlocutors, the introductions are addressed to Christians who are in need of encouragement and who fully accept the authority and authenticity of the New Testament. Consequently, Abū Rā'iṭa can be confident they will be seen as support for the point he is making.

Here one can identify a central aspect of Abū Rā'iṭa's apologetic strategy. He is well-aware that the biblical verses he chooses as proof texts will have a significant impact on the success of his argument because of the skepticism with which Muslims approach the Jewish and Christian scriptures. Thus, what lies behind his limited employment of the Gospels in the primary body of his arguments is his attentiveness to the difficulty presented by *taḥrīf*. Muslim scholars

texts from the Church Fathers instead of from scripture.

[15] Cf. Matt 6.11, 26, 7.14, 22.30; Luke 17.10, 20.35, etc.

had made the accusation that the New Testament had been altered, pointing out that Christians could produce neither an *isnād* (chain of reliable transmitters) for any of the writings it contained, nor an outside source substantiating their authenticity. As a result, the Qurʾan was deemed to be the only trustworthy source for doctrine.[16]

In response to this problem, Abū Rāʾiṭa turns the reader's attention to the reliability of the Old Testament. As he writes in *Holy Trinity* § 39 against the charge of *taḥrīf*, 'our enemies, the Jews' have copies that are the same as those possessed by the Christians. Even if the Jews were deceitful and had altered the scriptures to mislead Muslims and Christians, he argues, they would have kept authentic copies for their own use, and yet their texts do not differ from those possessed by the church. Thus, Abū Rāʾiṭa concludes, the Old Testament can be regarded as reliable. By extension, Christian doctrines that Muslims reject as inconsistent with true revelation from God can be substantiated by the Old Testament, as well as the New. Abū Rāʾiṭa's approach to this can be seen most clearly in the verses from the Old Testament collected in *Witnesses* intended to be used as proof texts for the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation.

The notion that Abū Rāʾiṭa's choice of scriptural texts in his introductory sections is strongly influenced by his concern for *taḥrīf* is supported by a second observation: when read from the qurʾanic perspective, these particular New Testament verses are not controversial. All the texts confirm God's aid and assistance to his devoted followers, the example of Jesus and his command to live a simple life dedicated to spreading the Gospel. Nothing here would be disputed by a Muslim reader. It is even possible that Abū Rāʾiṭa's argument in the *Proof* of the superiority of Christianity, with its emphasis on simplicity and humility, might be convincing to a Muslim. These are 'proof texts' in the best sense of the term.

Attention to the accusation of *taḥrīf* underlies Abū Rāʾiṭa's entire apologetic project, and can be identified most clearly in the second group of biblical passages found in his apologies, verses employed specifically to substantiate an aspect of doctrine within a broader logical argument. These are often used to provide analogies or to

[16] R. Caspar and J.-M. Gaudeul, 'Textes de la tradition musulmane concernant le *taḥrīf* (falsification) des écritures', *Islamochristiana* 6, 1980, [pp. 105-48] p. 66, n. 14; Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, pp. 41-7.

illustrate a particular point. For instance, *Holy Trinity* follows a complex logical proof of the possibility of plurality in the Godhead by the story of the three men who visit Abraham (Gen 18.1-3) as evidence of the three hypostases existing in the one God (§§ 35-6). In the *Proof* (§§ 12-14) Abū Rā'iṭa gives an extensive account of the story of the Exodus to argue that God uses signs and wonders to confirm the true religion and to foreshadow the coming of Christ. These examples, of course, draw upon the previous work of early Christian apologists responding to those who already accepted the Old Testament texts. However, here the arguments are put within a new context and utilize the consistency between Christian teachings and the Old and New Testaments to substantiate the reliability of all three.

In a few cases, the scriptural citations are placed in the mouths of Abū Rā'iṭa's Muslim questioners. The *Risāla on the Incarnation* contains several passages from the New Testament purportedly quoted by Muslims as proof that Jesus could not have been God, e.g., when Jesus tells the mother of the sons of Zebedee it is not for him to allot the place to his right and to his left in heaven (Matt 20.21, 23). Abū Rā'iṭa answers these questions one by one with systematic exegesis and explanations designed to show that Christian teaching is not inconsistent with what can be found in the Christian scriptures. In this example, he argues that the Messiah did not fail to give the places because he was incapable of doing so, but rather because places of honor had already been granted to all of the disciples, and showing particular favor to two of his followers would have caused jealousy among them (*Incarnation* §§ 70-2).

It is noteworthy here that the Muslim interlocutors are portrayed as pointing out inconsistencies between the doctrinal claims of Christians (e.g., Jesus' divinity) and the scriptures themselves (Jesus' apparent lack of divine knowledge and authority). The trajectory of the Muslim argument against Christian teachings is that, if contradictions resulting from misinterpretation or corruption can be identified in the scriptures then any doctrines extrapolated from them are also to be rejected as false.

As a result, one detects an underlying motivation in Abū Rā'iṭa's apologetics to establish that what Muslims might identify as *taḥrīf* is in fact true revelation from God. In several instances, Abū Rā'iṭa clarifies the text and provides rational explanations for apparent contradictions that might be construed as evidence of manipulation.

For example, the Muslim interlocutors underscore Jesus' own claim of ignorance concerning the Hour of his return. They argue that either Jesus did not know it (and therefore he cannot be the omniscient God), or he lied about knowing it (and so cannot be the just God). In either case, Jesus could not be divine, as Christians claim their scriptures say. Abū Rā'iṭa responds with a complex argument about lying and deceit, concluding that when God keeps knowledge hidden from his creatures, he does it for their own good, just as Jesus kept this knowledge from his disciples. Thus, this text does not prove that the Messiah is not God; instead, Jesus is acting here as God does (*Incarnation* §§ 63-9).

In each of these examples, Abū Rā'iṭa chooses biblical texts that illustrate the particular point of doctrine he is trying to demonstrate. In some cases, he provides uncontroversial examples (the visit to Abraham of the three men) and adds a Christian interpretation; in others, he directly tackles verses that are disputed and seem to confirm the charge of *taḥrīf*, providing an alternative explanation to refute the accusation. Thus, without making scriptural proof texts the centerpiece of his argument, Abū Rā'iṭa is able to introduce them in a more subtle manner as added evidence in his arsenal.

The third group of citations includes lists of verses (rather than individual quotations) that might be used to substantiate a logical proof given in the preceding section of the text. In some cases, they are accompanied by explanations tying them specifically to the argument just made, as in *Holy Trinity* and *Proof*. These lists resemble what have been called *testimonia* collections—groups of biblical verses assembled together because of their usefulness for preaching, catechesis and apologetics.[17] Given what can be deduced from the context and purpose of Abū Rā'iṭa's writings in response to Islam, his compilations were probably created to be employed by clergy

[17] The *testimonia* hypothesis has taken many forms among biblical scholars in the last two centuries. Most proponents of the hypothesis have posited the existence of oral or written compilations of useful texts that provided 'source books' for early Jewish and Christian writers. The existence of such compilations would help account for the similarity in the manner in which the texts are cited by various authors, as well as 'traditions' of errors and mistranslations. Of interest to us here are the parallels that can be identified between this method of collecting useful texts found in the writings of the Church Fathers and that of Abū Rā'iṭa. For a summary of theories about *testimonia* collections, see M.C. Albl, *'And Scripture Cannot Be Broken': The Form and Function of the Early Christian* Testimonia *Collections*, Leiden, 1999.

both with their own flocks and in discussions with Muslims.

Such lists can be identified in nearly all of Abū Rā'iṭa's writings, but the most extensive is the separate text already mentioned, the *Witnesses from the Words of the Torah, the Prophets and the Saints*. Although this collection of citations drawn solely from the Old Testament gives no internal clue to its author or purpose, it has traditionally been included among Abū Rā'iṭa's known writings. The text is found in the most complete manuscript collection of his works, Bibl. P. Sbath 1001, as the sixth of eight extant writings, and is the last of six writings in Par. Ar. 169, suggesting that it was received together with the other five as a single collection by the copyist. In spite of the fact that there is no reference to Abū Rā'iṭa in the compilation itself, its inclusion in these major collections of his works and the appearance of many of the biblical passages it contains throughout his other writings (especially in *Holy Trinity* and *Proof*) lead one to the confident conclusion that it is to be counted among the rest of his known literary output. Nonetheless, its apparent detachment from any explanatory text raises the question of its purpose and original context.

A clue to its relationship to Abū Rā'iṭa's other writings may by found in the opening of the text. The very first line identifies it as 'Witnesses for the Trinity from the Old [Testament]' (§ 1), followed by citations from Gen 1.2 and Gen 1.26. The introduction given to the second verse states: 'Then [Moses] said, *as was earlier mentioned*: . . . ' (§ 2, italics mine), implying that the reader has another text at hand containing a previous citation of Gen 1.26. An examination of Abū Rā'iṭa's extant writings reveals that this verse is found in three—*Holy Trinity*, the *Refutation of the Melkites*, and *Proof*. In the first two texts, the citations exhibit significant variations in the Arabic translations. The third, however, is very similar to that in *Witnesses* with the exception of the final word:

Gen 1.26:[18]

(W): نخلق انسانا كصورتنا ومثالنا ٠

(P): لنخلق انسانا كصورتنا وشبهنا ٠

(T): لنصنع انسانا بصورتنا وكشبهنا ٠

(R): لنصنع انسانا بشبهنا ومثالنا ٠

[18] (W) = *Witnesses*; (T) = *On the Holy Trinity*; (R) = *Refutation of the Melkites*; (P) = *Proof of the Christian Religion*.

As will be demonstrated in greater detail below, the variations in the Arabic likely indicate that Abū Rā'iṭa was translating the biblical verses as he needed them, rather than drawing on any 'authoritative' translation. In this instance, however, the similarity of the translations of Gen 1.26 found in *Witnesses* and in *Proof* may be evidence that he translated them within the same timeframe and for the same immediate purpose. This phenomenon is noticeable in several other cases, where the translation of a particular verse found in *Witnesses* is more similar to that in *Proof* than those of the other instances in his works. Further, the contents of *Proof* exhibit more topical similarities to *Witnesses* than to the other two texts. Based on this evidence, it might be hypothesized that *Witnesses* was originally a sort of appendix to *Proof*, rather than a separate work.

In favor of this suggestion one can point to the full title of *Proof* in the extant manuscripts: *A Risāla of Abū Rā'iṭa al-Takrītī on the Proof* (*ithbāt*) *of the Christian Religion and the Proof* (*ithbāt*) *of the Holy Trinity*.[19] Unfortunately, none of the manuscripts of *Proof* is complete and at least one page is obviously missing from the end the text leaving it without any extant 'proof of the Holy Trinity'.[20] To date no manuscript has been identified with the lost pages. If, however, *Proof* and *Witnesses* belong together, the title given in the *Proof* manuscripts makes more sense, since *Witnesses* contains verses to be used to substantiate various aspects of Trinitarian doctrine. This proposal also allows some more confident suggestions about the context and purpose of *Witnesses*.

At first glance, the list of approximately eighty verses from the Old Testament comprising *Witnesses* might appear to be a random collection of little interest to the contemporary scholar. However, on closer examination one can identify it as a useful compilation of proof texts for the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. All are brief, none are more than ten verses according

[19] Bibl. Sbath 1001, Bibl. Sbath 1041, Ms. 320 (Theol. 177). The second Sbath ms. is apparently related to the first, which is older and incomplete. The third was consulted by Georg Graf in Egypt, but its whereabouts are unknown today. It is notable that *Witnesses* is included as the sixth and *Proof* as the eighth in all three of the manuscripts, while both are missing from the other collection that contains most of Abū Rā'iṭa's writings, Par. ar. 169.

[20] Keating, *Defending*, p. 73.

to modern numbering, and several are only a few words in length. Although no explanations or headings are given within the text, some general themes among the verses chosen for inclusion in the compilation can be identified:[21]

Proof texts for the Holy Trinity

1. The activity of one or more hypostases[22] (Gen 1.2, 19.24; Ex 34.5, 6; Ps 4.8, 33.6, 56.10, 68.2, 107.20, 119.89, 119.105, 139.7, 143.10, 110.1, 74.12; Prov 30.4; Is 48.16;[23] Dan 7.9-10, 13-14; Bar 3.36-8; Zech 6.12; Hab 3.4; Mic 1.3);
2. God's self-reference in the plural and other references of multiplicity in God (Gen 1.26, 3.22, 11.7; Ps 8.1-2, 46.5-6, 47.8);
3. God speaking with Abraham, Moses and other human beings (Gen 8.1-3, 19.10-14, 18.16, 22-32; Ex 3.1-6; Dan 4.31).[24]

Proof texts for the Incarnation

1. Prophecy of the coming of a son/ruler (Is 7.14, 9.6-7; Jer 23.5-6; Mic 5.2; Gen 49.11; Zech 9.9-10);
2. Suffering, crucifixion and death of the Messiah (Is 50.4-7, 53.2-12, 65.1-2; Zech 12.10, 13.1, 7, 14.6-7, 11.12-14 (Matt 27.10); Mic 5.1; Wis 2.12; Amos 8.9; 2 Kings 3.19 (?),[25] Wis 14.7; Ps 16.10, 107.43, 41.9, 5-7, 69.21, 22.16-17, 88.4; Dan 9.25-6);
3. Signs, wonders and victory of the Messiah/God (Is 35.3-8, 49.7-10, 68.4, 33-4; Ps 68.1, 78.65, 118.22-3, 63.1-2, 24.7-8, 68.18, 57.5);
4. Apocalyptic/future expectation (Job 19.25; Zeph 3.8).

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[21] The themes identified here do not reflect the order of the verses found in *Witnesses*.

[22] This category includes some verses that might also be used as proof texts for the Incarnation, particularly those that speak about God's presence on the earth in space and time.

[23] This is not in the Septuagint.

[24] One finds in the writings of several Church Fathers the identification of the Second Person of the Trinity with the one who speaks to figures in the Old Testament. For example, in his *First Apology* Justin Martyr writes that God spoke to Moses and Abraham in the form of fire and as an angel, and that this was in fact the Word of God, Jesus Christ (ch. 63). Irenaeus states that it is the 'Word' who spoke to Moses in the Burning Bush (*Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* § 2) and Gregory of Nyssa makes a similar connection in his *Life of Moses* § 21, relating the light of divinity that shines through Jesus' human birth to the light that does not consume the Bush.

[25] The source of this citation is unclear.

The themes of the verses included follow a recognizable pattern already established by the Church Fathers in their anti-Jewish polemic, and most of the citations provided in this compilation are found in the apologetic works of Justin, Athanasius, Tertullian, Novatian, and numerous others.[26] Nevertheless, research done to date has not uncovered a particular writer or text on which Abū Rā'iṭa appears to have relied. Rather, it can be argued that *Witnesses* is a unique and original compilation of verses that has been preserved because of its usefulness within the particular context in which it was composed.

What separates this collection from previous lists of scripture used in Christian apologies is the intention for which these verses have been chosen, which is to respond to the charge that Christian doctrine is based on scriptures that have been corrupted through *tāhrīf*. Unlike the aim of earlier apologists to demonstrate to both pagans and Jews that Christians had interpreted the Hebrew scriptures correctly by seeing in them the archetypes and prophecy of the Triune God and Incarnation, Abū Rā'iṭa and his contemporaries must contend with the problem of defending the integrity of the Christian scriptures themselves. As a consequence, they are greatly limited by the verses that can be considered useful for apologetic purposes.

In *Witnesses* Abū Rā'iṭa has for the most part carefully selected excerpts from the Old Testament that have parallel terminology or figures (such as Abraham and Moses) in the Qurʾan. As was demonstrated concerning New Testament excerpts found in the introductions of his *rasā'il*, with a few exceptions one could argue that the verses offered are not inconsistent with what is stated in the Qur'an. For example, biblical verses Abū Rā'iṭa includes that are interpreted by Christians as allegories of the hypostases of the Trinity generally refer to the 'Word' (*kalima*) or the 'Spirit' (*rūḥ*), both terms used in connection with God and Jesus in the Qurʾan (e.g., Q 4.171; 19.17; 21.91). Those verses prophesying the coming of the Messiah and the events surrounding him on earth (apart from the crucifixion and death) would not be contested either. One might argue over whether these verses prove Jesus is God, but conversely Muslims might claim that they support the qur'anic recognition of him as the Messiah.

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[26] See Albl, *Scripture Cannot Be Broken*, esp. pp. 97-148.

Abū Rā'iṭa's inclusion of texts that speak of the suffering, crucifixion and death of the Messiah are an interesting addition. His claim elsewhere that the Jews would not include something in their own books that they know is untrue only to deceive Christians, nor intentionally put forward evidence to support Christian teachings, would lend credence to the authenticity of these particular verses within an apologetic context. In short, one could argue that if the Old Testament had indeed prophesied the suffering and death of the Messiah, which Christians maintain occurred at the crucifixion of Jesus, the reliability of both Christian doctrine and the Hebrew scriptures is reinforced. Neither Jews nor Christians would wish to legitimate the other, yet their teachings agree on the necessity of the suffering and death of the Messiah, in contrast with the rejection of this idea in the Qur'an (4.157).

The format of *Witnesses* leads one to the conclusion that Abū Rā'iṭa expects that these verses will be used primarily by Christians for apologetic purposes. This aim separates *Witnesses* from most of Abū Rā'iṭa's other writings, which show evidence of the expectation that Muslims might also engage them. At the most basic level, the mere fact that the texts are written in Arabic greatly increases their audience outside Christian circles.[27] *Witnesses*, however, is simply a list with no explanation of the significance of the texts included. Only someone knowledgeable in Christian theology and apologetics would recognize the organization of its contents and its usefulness. As such, it provides an indispensable tool for those engaged in apologetic projects, while leaving the construction of the arguments to the competent apologist.

Translation of the scriptural texts

As was noted above, a careful examination of the translations of individual scripture verses found in multiple writings of Abū Rā'iṭa reveals similarities and differences that may point to a relationship between the texts. Some of these can be reproduced here for the sake of the argument:

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[27] Keating, 'Refuting', pp. 46-7. The desire to make Christian writings accessible to Muslims is certainly a factor in the increasing number of texts written in Arabic at the beginning of the ninth century.

Gen 3.22
(W): ادام قد صار كواحد منا.
(P): ادم قد صار كاحدنا.
(T): ادم قد صار كواحد منا.
(R): ادم صار كاحدنا.

Gen 11.7
(W): وقال تعالوا ننزل ونفرق اللسن.
(P): تعالوا ننزل ونفرق هناك اللسن.
(T): قال تعالوا ننزل ونفرق اللسن.

Ps 33.6
(W): بكلمة الله خلقت السموات وبروح فيه كل اجناده.
(T): بكلمة الله خلقت السموات وبروح فيه كل قواتها.

Ps 56.10
(W): وقال ايضاً بكلمة الله اسبح.
(P): وقاله ايضاً لكلمة الله اسبح.
(T): قال لكلمة الله اسبح.

Ps 107.20
(W): ارسل كلمته فابرأهم وخلصهم من الحبل.
(P): ارسل كلمته فابرأهم وخلصهم من الفساد.
(T): ارسل كلمته فشفاهم وخلصهم من الموت.

These few examples highlight several important points. Firstly, it is striking that although the same basic sentence structure is found in the multiple instances of a single verse, in only a limited number is the translation identical. Most citations contain slight variations (the inclusion of pronouns, alternative terms, or particles) that do not change the meaning. This observation leads us to two further conjectures. It is obvious that the similarities among the citations point to an underlying text from which the translations are being made. Vööbus was one of the first to suggest that the source for the translated biblical citations in Abū Rā'iṭa's writings is the Old Syriac version.[28] Close examination of the text in fact bears this

[28] Vööbus, *Early Versions*, esp. pp. 271-7.

out. Most noticeably, the sentence structure of the Arabic verses follows that of the Old Syriac almost slavishly.

The variations, however, imply what is of equal importance, that Abū Rā'iṭa apparently does not have an Arabic translation of the Bible available to him and is making translations of the verses as he needs them for his project. While a limited number of Arabic versions of some religious texts (in whole or in part) may have existed in Iraq in the early ninth century, there is nothing like a complete standard translation of the Bible. It is not surprising, then, that Abū Rā'iṭa, in his capacity as *malpônô*, would have been commissioned or seen it as a part of his duties to make available Arabic translations of biblical texts for those engaged in apologetic activities. Until more extensive translations could be made, these brief renderings would have been invaluable to Christians confronted with the transition of their culture.

Conclusion

One sees, then, that use of scripture in the apologetic writings of Abū Rā'iṭa manifests a concern for addressing the Muslim charge that the scriptures have been altered. As a consequence, he draws uncontroversial passages from the New Testament primarily to support Christians in their faith, and only quotes a limited number of contested verses in the sections where he provides alternative exegesis.

On the other hand, one finds numerous references to the Old Testament, particularly in lists of proof texts, what might be called *testimonia*, that Abū Rā'iṭa clearly believes will be useful for proving his arguments. These, too, show signs of having been carefully constructed to include either verses that would not be clearly contradictory to what is found in the Qur'ān, or that contain words and phrases (such as Word and Spirit) that could drive the debate forward. It is possible that he draws on existing *testimonia* collections he had available previously used for anti-Jewish apologetics, but most likely that he creates his own to suit his purpose. This is something that requires more research.

In conclusion, although the scripture passages found in Abū Rā'iṭa's apologetic works responding to Muslims are not integrated

into the extensive logical arguments presented, they do indeed play an important role. Abū Rā'iṭa is very aware of the suspicion that the Bible in the hands of the Christians has been altered, and as a consequence his concern for circumventing any charge of *taḥrīf* guides both his choice and use of the verses he includes. Over time, his experience as a teacher and apologist leads him to identify many of the passages, and to translate and collect them into useful lists to be employed by other apologists. It was this work that earned him recognition among the eastern churches for centuries.

AL-RADD AL-ǰAMĪL: AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S OR PSEUDO-GHAZĀLĪ'S?

MAHA EL-KAISY FRIEMUTH

Al-radd al-jamīl li-ilāhiyyat 'Īsā bi-ṣarīḥ al-Inǰīl is a polemical work which refutes the Christian concept of the divinity of Jesus Christ. It was probably written between the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Three manuscript copies of it exist, two of them giving Abu Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī as its author. Two of these manuscripts are located in the Aya Sophia Library in Istanbul, under the numbers 2246 and 2247; the third copy is in the University of Leiden and has the classification OR828.

In 1932 L. Massignon discovered the copies in Aya Sophia and wrote an article entitled 'Le Christ dans les Evangiles selon al-Ghazālī'[1] giving a good summary of this treatise and accepting its attribution to al-Ghazālī. Later, in 1939, R. Chidiac[2] made a critical edition of it and translated it into French. In the same year, we hear from C.E. Padwick[3] that K. Henrey prepared an English translation in Beirut, but it seems that this translation was never published. J.W. Sweetman gave a detailed summary with a translation of many passages in his two-volume work *Islam and Christian Theology*[4] (1945), and A.J. Arberry translated some parts of the text of the *Radd* in his book *Aspects of Islamic Civilization* published in 1964.[5] In 1966 F.-E. Wilms produced a German translation of the Arabic text as edited by Chidiac,[6] and the Egyptian scholar Muḥammad al-Sharqāwī edited the Arabic version of the same Chidiac edition in 1986.[7]

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[1] L. Massignon, 'Le Christ dans les Evangiles selon al-Ghazālī', *Revue des Études Islamiques* 6, 1932, pp. 523-36.

[2] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Al-Radd al-jamīl li-ilāhiyyat 'Īsā bi-ṣarīḥ al-Inǰīl*, ed. and trans. R. Chidiac, Paris, 1939.

[3] C. Padwick, 'The Arabic Gospel', *The Moslem World* 29, 1939, [pp. 130-40] p. 132.

[4] J.W. Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, part 2, vol. I, London, 1945.

[5] A.J. Arberry, *Aspects of Islamic Civilization*, London, 1969, pp. 300-7.

[6] F.E. Wilms, *Al-Ghazalis Schrift wider die Gottheit Jesu*, Leiden, 1966.

[7] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Al-Radd al-jamīl li-ilāhiyyat 'Īsā bi-ṣarīḥ al-Inǰīl*, ed. M

All the scholars mentioned above accept al-Ghazālī as the author of *Al-radd al-jamīl*, though with the reservation that it may have been delivered in the form of lectures and the text may represent lecture notes taken by one or several students of his. The reason why Chidiac considered this possibility is mainly its style, which in some parts does not present the typical features of al-Ghazālī.

The first to challenge the authenticity of this work as al-Ghazālī's was the French scholar M. Bouyges in his *Essai de chronologie des oeuvres d'al-Ghazālī*.[8] He placed *Al-radd al-jamīl* among the books only doubtfully attributable to this author. A. Badawi followed Bouyges, also expressing doubt concerning the attribution of the book to al-Ghazālī. W.M. Watt and F. Jabr do not mention the book at all when dealing with al-Ghazālī's works. However, it was H. Lazarus-Yafeh's thorough criticism, in her *Studies in al-Ghazzālī* (1975),[9] which presented a serious challenge to the authenticity of this book as a product of al-Ghazālī. Recently, G. S. Reynolds has confirmed her criticism and added significant points to it in his article 'The ends of *Al-radd al-jamīl* and its portrayal of Christian sects'.[10]

Thus, well-known scholars have disagreed as to whether al-Ghazālī is the author of *Al-radd al-jamīl* and my task here is to present the arguments on both sides, to discuss some passages which might take us a step further, and to draw some conclusions which may shed light on the question of the authorship of the treatise. In order to do so, this chapter will first give a brief summary of its contents and will then move to examine what can be learnt from the external evidence and the internal evidence in turn. In a separate section, it will attempt to answer the question of who did write *Al-radd al-jamīl*, and finally will draw some conclusions.

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al-Sharqāwī, Cairo, 1986.

[8] M. Bouyges, *Essai de chronologie des oeuvres d'al-Ghazālī*, ed. M. Allard, Beirut, 1959, Appendix VI, pp.125-6.

[9] H. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in al-Ghazzālī*, Jerusalem, 1975.

[10] G.S. Reynolds, 'The ends of *Al-radd al-jamīl* and its portrayal of Christian sects', *Islamochristiana* 25, 1999, pp. 45-65.

Summary of Al-radd al-jamīl

The author of *Al-radd al-jamīl* discusses the most important and crucial concept in Christian belief: the features of divinity attributed to Jesus which declare him to be the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He starts his task by accusing Christian theologians of misinterpreting some biblical verses which lead to the concept of the divinity of Jesus. He introduces at the very beginning of his discussion the two main rules of interpretation to be used in his refutation, which should be the guiding principles for anyone who reads these texts. They are as follows:

> [Firstly,] if the passages presented are in accord with what is rational, their literal meaning should be allowed to stand, and if they are opposed or resist a rational explanation, it will be necessary to resort to *ta'wīl*…to believe that the [literal] realities of them are not intended, and to fall back on the metaphorical meaning. The second principle is that when the indications are contradictory, one affirming and the other negating, the contradiction should not be allowed to stand unless we have come to the conclusion that it is impossible for us to reconcile the two and bring them down to one single agreed meaning.[11]

These two rules establish the intellectual basis on which the discussion of the whole treatise will be built. Here and elsewhere the author repeats that the main criterion for accepting a certain concept is its agreement with the clarity of the intellect, *bi-ṣarīḥ al-'aql*, a phrase which is repeated very frequently throughout the treatise. If revealed texts in themselves are clear to the intellect they should not be interpreted, but if they contradict other texts or cannot be accepted rationally they must be clarified and considered as metaphors with a symbolic meaning. Thus, his refutation of the Christian belief in the divinity of Jesus rests on giving metaphorical interpretations of many passages from the Gospels which present or imply the divinity of Jesus, so that they point to his sainthood and prophetic powers without attributing divinity to him. Using metaphor here, explains the author, must be in accordance with what the intellect accepts; in contrast, interpreting metaphorical passages to express what the mind cannot accept is, for him, absurd. An example is his treatment of the concept of the 'Word' in its sense of 'Logos'. He accepts the

[11] Sweetman, *Theology*, p. 267.

interpretation that 'Logos' means God, as in the text of John 1.1, but when the Word as Logos is applied to Jesus so as to mean that the Word became flesh, as in John 1.14, he insists that the word in the second case cannot be interpreted as denoting God but rather refers to his command (*kun*) or the essence (*logos*) of the human. The main point here for him is that since it is unacceptable to the intellect to acknowledge that the Word as God became flesh, then, according to the two rules cited above, one has to apply a metaphorical interpretation here rather than accept the literal meaning.

In this manner the author goes through six different texts which attribute divinity to Jesus and interprets them either by means of metaphorical methods or by connecting them with other texts which clearly present Jesus as human, subject to various human experiences and limitations.

In the second part of his treatise, the author seeks to refute the divinity of Jesus through his discussion of the concept of Union, as interpreted by the three main Christian sects, the Jacobites, Melkites and Nestorians. Here it seems, as Reynolds rightly maintains, that his argument is based on a sound knowledge of the Jacobites and their refutations of the teachings of the other two sects.[12] While this could imply that the author had access to Coptic or Jacobite literature, it does not necessarily prove him to be himself a Copt, as Reynolds claims. Jacobite writings had in fact spread all over Jerusalem and Iraq; the famous Jacobite scholar Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, who was known for collecting texts, probably collected Jacobite writings in his library in Baghdad. C. E. Padwick explains that the Syriac-speaking church of Iraq had maintained close contact and deep friendship with the Coptic Church of Egypt and that Coptic literature was available in Iraq and was also widespread in Jerusalem.[13] Thus, non-Christian polemicists such as Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq and al-Qāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm had access to works representing the three sects, and by the time of al-Ghazālī many of these works were available in Arabic. The author of the *Radd* probably studied the beliefs of these sects from the works of polemicists which referred at length to discussions between them.

In his third and final part the author examines the various di-

[12] Reynolds, 'The ends', pp. 16-18.
[13] Padwick, 'The Arabic Gospel', p. 136.

vine titles by which Jesus is known, such as God, *al-Ilāh*, the Son, *al-Ibn*, the Word, *al-Kalima*, and also those which attribute eternity to him, notably in the text of John 8.56 which implies that Jesus existed before Abraham. Here Jesus says: 'Your father Abraham longed to see my day and he saw it and was glad.' In this section the author refers to many biblical verses which show that many of these titles were also attributed to other prophets and that Jesus' existence before Abraham must be interpreted metaphorically since the very claim that Jesus became the Messiah through union with God acknowledges that this happened at a certain point in history long after Abraham's death. At the end of the treatise the author discusses the qur'anic verse: 'O people of the book do not exaggerate in your religion and speak of Allah nothing but the truth. The Christ, Jesus son of Maryam, is only the apostle of Allah and His word which He has cast into Maryam and a spirit from him' (Q 4.170).[14] The author gives a long explanation that the 'word' in the qur'anic text should be taken to mean not the Christian 'logos' but a divine word, which may be *kun*, the word of God and the creating command, as it is understood in other qur'anic passages.

Having presented the intentions of the author through this summary of his arguments against the claim of the divinity of Jesus, I turn here to examine first the external evidence against the attribution of this treatise to al-Ghazālī and then the external evidence in favour of it. In the same manner I will go on to treat the internal evidence, hoping by the end to have discussed all the possible arguments for and against the attribution of this work to al-Ghazālī.

External evidence

Lazarus-Yafeh and other scholars argue that a certain amount of evidence points to the spurious nature of this work, the most important of which is that the book is not referred to by any of the Muslim historians who wrote about al-Ghazālī's life. Bouyges points out that the work appears for the first time in modern lists compiled at the beginning of the twentieth century by al-Qabbānī and al-Ḥilmī.[15]

[14] Sweetman, *Theology*, p. 305.
[15] Bouyges, *Essai*, p. 126.

Though she admits that the Copt Abū al-Khayr Ibn al-Ṭayyib (d. thirteenth century) mentions al-Ghazālī as the author of *Al-radd al-jamīl* in an appendix to one of his treatises, Lazarus-Yafeh, considers that the work was mainly known in the Coptic environment, which supports her thesis that the work was written by a Coptic convert to Islam. In addition, although al-Ghazālī had the habit of referring to his previous works, he never refers to this book when he is talking about Jews and the Christians in his other works.[16]

Lazarus-Yafeh also considers that some of the scholars who accept this work as al-Ghazālī's are influenced by the claim that he visited Egypt during his ten years of seclusion and worship. But since she considers this visit to be apocryphal, she rejects the connection between the *Radd* and al-Ghazālī, though she does connect the book to Coptic Egypt.[17]

Important in our discussion of external evidence for his not having written the treatise is the fact that Muslim historians do not mention the *Radd* among al-Ghazālī's books. Clearly most historians were not interested in a thorough investigation of al-Ghazālī's actual works, since they mention in the same list both authentic and non-authentic attributions. This probably results from their practice of copying from one another. However, Ibn al-Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1791), who, Lazarus-Yafeh says, 'deals with the question of the spurious books of al-Ghazālī',[18] does mention in his book *Itḥāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn*[19] a book with the title *Al-qawl al-jamīl fī al-radd ʿalā man ghayyar al-Injīl* among al-Ghazālī's works. This title was copied by ʿAbd al-Qādir Ibn ʿAbdallāh al-ʿAydarus Baʿalawī in his book *Taʿrīf al-aḥyā' bi-faḍā'il al-iḥyā',* which is written in the margins of al-Zabīdī's book. Ḥajjī Khalīfa mentions the book in his Catalogue, vol. IV, no 9650, under the title *Al-radd al-jamīl ʿalā man ghayyar al-Tawrāt wa-al-Injīl.*[20] Wilms points out that this title of the book (and also the one mentioned by al-Zabīdī) has a problem concerning its second part, because it gives the impression that al-Ghazālī accuses Christians and Jews of corrupting the text of scripture, though this

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[16] Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies*, pp. 459-60.
[17] Ibid., p. 459.
[18] Ibid, p. 461
[19] Al-Murtaḍa Ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Zabīdī, *Itḥāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn bi-sharḥ asrār Iḥyā' ʿulūm al-dīn*, 10 vols, Princeton NJ, 1963, vol. I, p. 42.
[20] Wilms, *Al-Ghazalis Schrift*, p. 34, n. 4.

slight change of title in relatively late catalogues cannot be taken as strong evidence. Whatever the case, these writers all confirm that al-Ghazālī wrote a polemical work against the Christians with the title *Al-radd* or *Al-qawl al-jamīl*.[21]

There may be many reasons why the book was not well known. Some scholars consider that the acceptance by a very important figure such as al-Ghazālī of the authenticity and integrity of the biblical text would have made the book unpopular among Muslims. This is the opinion of Chidiac, Abū Rīdah and Wilms.

However, one important piece of evidence which supports al-Ghazālī's authorship of this work is the long quotation which Abū al-Khayr Ibn al-Ṭayyib gives in the main body of his treatise *Maqāla fī al-radd ʿalā al-muslimīn*.[22] The treatise mentions the work entitled *Al-radd al-jamīl* as a well-known and important work of Muslim polemic which was written by al-Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. Ibn Al-Ṭayyib's treatise in fact consists mainly of one long quotation and another very short one from the *Radd*. The long quotation is concerned with an explanation of the Trinity in which al-Ghazālī presents the philosophical interpretation of a Christian commentator, and which he accepts as plausible.

These two quotations are mostly identical with Chidiac's text, pp. 43-5 and 26. However, comparison of the two reveals differences in a number of places: Ibn al-Ṭayyib's text on p. 177 line 5 from the bottom has the words *al-dhāt al-ilāhiyya*, while in Chidiac on p. 44 line 8 the words are *dhāt al-ilāh*; on p. 178 line 3 Ibn al-Ṭayyib's text gives *dhāt Allāh*, while in Chidiac p. 44 line 15 the phrase is *dhāt al-ilāh*; in the short quotation from al-Ghazālī at the end of Ibn al-Ṭayyib's treatise p. 178 line 4 from the bottom, the words *al-Bāri' taʿālā* are changed to *al-ilāh* in Chidiac p. 26 line 7; in Ibn al-Ṭayyib's text God is referred to as the Intellect (*al-ʿAql*) while in Chidiac he is the Pure Intellect (*al-ʿAql al-mujarrad*). However, the greatest difference appears in an addition in Chidiac's text which is absent from Ibn al-Ṭayyib's. This addition is as follows: 'So the Father connotes the idea of Existence, the Word (or the Son) con-

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Abū al-Khayr Ibn al-Ṭayyib, '*Maqāla fī al-radd ʿalā al-muslimīn alladhīna yuttahimūn al-Naṣārā bi-al-ʾtiqād bi-thalāthat ālihа*', in P. Sbath, *Vingt Traités*, Cairo, 1929, pp. 176-8.

notes the idea of Knowledge and the Holy Spirit connotes the idea of Essence, of the Creator being intellected by him.' [23]

This passage in Ibn al-Ṭayyib mainly presents the argument that the Father represents the (pure) Intellect, *al-ʿAql*, the Son is the Intellector, *al-ʿĀqil*, and the Holy Spirit is intellection, *al-Maʿqūl*. The author of the *Radd* also seems to accept this as a plausible interpretation of the essence of God as the single source of knowledge, the one who perceives knowledge, and what is perceivable. He ends this paragraph as follows: 'If the ideas are correct, there is no need to quarrel about phraseologies or terminologies,[24] *idha ṣaḥḥat al-maʿānī fa-lā mushāḥḥa fī al-alfāẓ*.' These words not only express al-Ghazālī's logic, with which we are familiar in many of his works, but they are also, as Lazarus-Yafeh admits,[25] identical to words which can be traced in other books of his. The author explains that this interpretation comes from one of the Christian commentators, who is probably the Jacobite philosopher Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī. Chidiac's addition to this text seems to give a little more explanation to Ibn al-Ṭayyib's original.

Another observation arises here. Ibn al-Ṭayyib seems to have quoted not from the text of *Al-radd al-jamīl* directly, but rather from the work of another Muslim scholar. He starts his treatise by reporting that some Muslims say that the Christians worship three Gods because of the text in Matt 28.19 which says that believers should be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He replies that Christianity is a product of the Gospels, the Epistles of Paul and the Acts of the Apostles, and that these are a witness to their belief. He explains that he does not want to go into detail but wishes mainly to present a summary of the Muslims' thesis. And here he starts to quote from a work which seems to be written by a Muslim scholar who includes in what he has written one long quotation and another short one from *Al-radd al-jamīl*. First he gives a very short summary of the passage, and then quotes it at length and explains that he is reporting here the great Imām Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī in his well-known book (*kitābihi al-maʿrūf*) *Al-radd*

[23] Arberry, *Aspects*, p 300; see also Chidiac, *Al-radd*, p.44 lines 6-7.
[24] Arberry, *Aspects*, p. 301.
[25] Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies*, p. 467.

al-jamīl.[26] He cites a long passage from the *Radd* which has its equivalent in Chidiac pp. 43-5, saying at the end that in this book al-Ghazālī also explains 'the humanity of Jesus which is taken from Mary',[27] and then gives a short quotation from another passage (Chidiac, p. 26), which is the opening of the part of the work on the three sects which is in the middle of the text. This could suggest that the writer has the whole text in front of him. In his second reference to al-Ghazālī he calls him al-Shaykh Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, adding *raḍya Allāhu ʿanhu* ('may God be pleased with him'), and he ends by saying '[al-Ghazālī] has clarified' and adds *raḥimahu Allāh* ('may God have mercy on him'). These two expressions, *raḍya Allāhu ʿanhu* and *raḥimahu Allāh*[28] are typical expressions used by Muslims when showing great respect. If my deductions are correct, this shows that the text of *Al-radd al-jamīl* was first found by Muslims and in a Muslim source. This may have been either an account of al-Ghazālī's life and works, or a work which refuted certain Christian beliefs and mentioned part of al-Ghazālī's *Radd* as an authority in this matter.

Thus it seems here that the later text of Chidiac was edited to prove a certain point. The word *Allāh* is once rendered as *al-Ilāh*, the phrase *al-dhāt al-ilāhiyya* as *dhāt al-Ilāh* and the word *al-Bāri'* becomes *al-Ilāh*,[29] with three sentences added for further clarification, and the addition of the adjective 'pure' to 'the Intellect'. It is also important here to mention that Chidiac shows that the three MSS we have are by no means identical, and the third, which he calls G, is a much later copy than the other two and has a list of omissions which extends to two pages. The other two copies, which he calls B and S, differ in many instances and contain two mistakes in the copying of the qur'anic text, which he finds very strange.[30] Can this support the possibility that the texts which we have were copied by Christians? For the differences referred to above are obviously not copyists' mistakes but editorial amendments. The questions which cannot be answered here, however, are: were there other editions and corrections to the texts which survived, and can our text of

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[26] Ibn al-Ṭayyib, *Maqāla*, p. 177.
[27] Ibid., p. 178.
[28] Ibid, p.178, lines 9 and 13.
[29] Chidiac, *Al-radd*, pp. 44 and 26.
[30] Ibid, p. 98.

Chidiac and its style actually prove the identity of the author?

Finally, we should explore the claim that al-Ghazālī visited Egypt, which Massignon, Chidiac and Hourani accept and use as an important argument for considering the *Radd* as one of his authentic works. The visit is supposed to have begun some time between 489 and 490 AH, after his visit to Jerusalem.[31] Ibn ʿAsākir, al-Ghazālī's contemporary, did not report this trip, saying that after al-Ghazālī visited Damascus and Jerusalem he returned to Khorāsān, but al-Ṣafadī, al-Subkī[32], al-ʿAynī, Ibn Khallikān[33] and Yāqūt[34] all confirm the visit. Al-Ṣafadī[35] seems to have been the first to report it in some detail. After al-Ghazālī left Jerusalem,

> he set himself towards Egypt and stayed a while in Alexandria. It is said that he intended to sail towards Morocco to meet the prince Yūsuf Ibn Tashfīn because of what he had heard of his enthusiasm and support for people of knowledge. But after he [al-Ghazālī] was informed of his death he returned to his own land, Ṭūs.[36]

Wilms attempts to give a more plausible explanation for this visit, apart from al-Ghazālī's intention to go to Morocco. Al-Ghazālī, he believes, was probably ordered by the Caliph in Baghdad to write a series of polemical books against those scholars and sects who threatened to introduce instability into the empire. These are his polemical works against such groups as the philosophers, the Ismāʿīlīs, the Christians (of Egypt) and the liberalists.[37] Al-Ghazālī, then, could have been sent to Egypt to meet some Muslim scholars who were involved in the publication of polemical works against the Coptic Christians, who enjoyed great privileges under the Fāṭimids. It follows that there are no irrefutable arguments against such a trip, and many reasons to accept the possibility.

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[31] This is the date which M. al-Sharqāwī gives in his edition of the *Radd*, p. 15. I have not found it in other sources.

[32] Tāj al-Dīn Ibn Naṣr al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya*, Cairo, n.d., vol. VI, p. 199.

[33] Wilms, *Al-Ghazālīs Schrift*, p. 23.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *Al-wāfī bi- al-wafayāt*, Istanbul, vol. I, 1931, p. 275.

[36] Ibid., p. 274.

[37] Wilms, *Al-Ghazālīs Schrift*, pp. 27-31.

Internal evidence

The internal evidence against attributing the work to al-Ghazālī is best summed up by Lazarus-Yafeh in the appendix of her book *Studies in al-Ghazzālī* and by G. S. Reynolds in his article 'The ends of *Al-radd al-jamīl* and its portrayal of the Christian sects'. To my knowledge these are the most thorough refutations of al-Ghazālī's authorship of the *Radd*. Below, I also present the counter arguments of those who tend to accept the *Radd* as al-Ghazālī's composition.

The writing style of the author of the *Radd*, first of all, seems to be in general different from what we are accustomed to in al-Ghazālī's books, though Chidiac and Lazarus-Yafeh herself admit that the text also contains some expressions which are typical of him.[38] Nevertheless, Lazarus-Yafeh considers this unfamiliar style to be the main ground for rejecting the work as al-Ghazālī's, while Chidiac and Wilms use the explanation that it may have been delivered in the form of lectures on which notes were taken by one of his students. The main reason for this compromise is that the reasoning and argumentation which the author uses here are very close to those used by al-Ghazālī in two other polemical works, one against the philosophers, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, and the other against the Ismā'īlīs, *Faḍā'iḥ al-bāṭiniyya*,[39] as will be demonstrated below. Furthermore, from the text of Ibn al-Ṭayyib above we can identify additions and alterations of some words in the text of Chidiac, which suggests the possibility that the texts have undergone further editing in their expression.

Lazarus-Yafeh also mentions the problem of the usage of philosophical terminology[40] in this work, using this to support her general conclusion on the basis that all the books which al-Ghazālī wrote after he began to follow Ṣūfism (from 488/1095) are distinguished by a new style of writing, which avoids the use of philosophical language and terminology. However, it is quite obvious that al-Ghazālī used more than one style of writing in the period when he wrote to different groups of thinkers, before his conversion to Ṣufism. This can be seen in his *Tahāfut,* which uses philosophical language, while his

[38] Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies*, p. 467.
[39] Wilms, *Al-Ghazālīs Schrift*, pp. 27-30.
[40] Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies*, pp. 468-9.

Iqtiṣād is written in the same period but in a totally different style, since it is directed to theologians. Thus al-Ghazālī did not restrict his style but could freely use whatever was appropriate for his intended readers. In the last years of his life, when he devoted his writing to Ṣūfī subjects, his style obviously followed the subject-matter of his writings. However, this need not mean that he totally abandoned the use of any other style. An example here is *Al-mustaṣfā,* one of his last works, which uses legal terminology and style and even brings in different forms of reasoning from those found in his Ṣūfī writings. Therefore, it is not reasonable to exclude the possibility of his using a philosophical style when the communication required it and a certain readership was targeted, especially since it is possible that the *Radd* was written at a time not long after his other philosophical writings, at the beginning of his retirement.

Both Lazarus-Yafeh and Reynolds consider the author of the *Radd* to have been quite familiar with the Bible and the Christian sects' various refutations of each other, a familiarity which al-Ghazālī does not demonstrate in any of his other writings, and which suggests the possibility that the writer of the *Radd* could well have been a Coptic convert to Islam.[41]

It is quite clear from the *Radd* that the author is fairly well acquainted with the New and Old Testaments, which demonstrates that he made a thorough study of the Bible before producing his criticism, a feature which evokes al-Ghazālī if we remember his efforts to master philosophy and his completing the important work *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* before writing his actual polemical work *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*. Of course, this feature is not limited to the author of the *Radd*, as Accad demonstrates in 'The Gospels in the Muslim and Christian exegetical discourse',[42] but is common to all Muslim polemicists who demonstrated extensive knowledge of both the Bible and the writings of the various early Christian sects, such as al-Qāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm, al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Bāqillānī, ʿAbd al-Jabbār, Ibn Ḥazm and finally al-Ghazālī's teacher al-Juwaynī.[43] Besides, most of them benefited

[41] Ibid., pp. 472-3; see also Reynolds, 'The ends', p. 55.

[42] M. Accad, 'The Gospels in the Muslim and Christian exegetical discourse', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 2001, Ch. II A.

[43] Ibid.

greatly from the detailed works of Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq[44] in refuting Christian concepts.

On the other hand, the author is sometimes significantly lacking in knowledge: he seems to believe, as Arberry points out,[45] that John's Gospel was written originally in Coptic since he refers to the sentence in John 1.14 'the Word became flesh'[46] in its Coptic translation to prove that in Coptic the sentence should be read as 'the Word made flesh'. His long discussion about the correct reading of this sentence clearly shows that he really believed that John wrote his Gospel in Coptic. Clearly no Coptic scholar who converted to Islam would make such a basic mistake. At another point, the author wants to present Jesus' original words on the cross in a way that shows he believed them to have been in Hebrew, not realising that Jesus spoke Aramaic. Such limitations in his knowledge of the nature of the Bible show that the author could not have not been a Coptic convert; someone as capable of reasoning and argumentation as is demonstrated in *Al-radd al-jamīl* must have been a knowledgeable scholar who, if he had been a Christian, would have known such basic facts as the original language of the Bible and the language which Jesus spoke.

Moreover the *Radd* offers very simple argumentation in just one short paragraph on the subject of salvation. While it is very untypical for a Christian to ignore the importance of salvation, most Muslim polemicists, as al-Sharfī demonstrates,[47] do not give much attention to the concept of salvation, considering that it does not deserve a thorough discussion. This and the misconceptions referred to above make it very unlikely indeed that *Al-radd al-jamīl* was written by a Christian convert.

Here, however, we should deal with the matter of the quotation of verses in foreign languages: the author includes two sentences in Hebrew and one in Coptic. As Lazarus-Yafeh points out,[48] al-Ghazālī does not quote in foreign languages anywhere else in his writings and it is very unlikely that he knew Hebrew or Coptic,

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[44] *Early Muslim Polemic against Christianity, Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's 'Against the Incarnation'*, ed. D. Thomas, Cambridge, 2002.

[45] Arberry, *Aspects*, p. 300.

[46] Chidiac, *Al-radd*, pp. 46-7.

[47] A. al-Sharfī, *Al-fikr al-islāmī fī al-radd ʿalā al-Naṣārā*, Tunis, 1986, pp. 397-405.

[48] Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies*, p. 469.

since no other source suggests that he did. The first of these three sentences are the words of Jesus on the cross: 'My God, my God why have you deserted me?' Here, the author wants to refer to the actual words of Jesus, which he takes to be in Hebrew. The second sentence is 'The Word became flesh', about which he argues that their meaning in Coptic should be 'The Word made flesh' and the third sentence is in connection with a miracle of Moses in Ex 4.6: 'Behold his hand was leprous as snow.' While there seems to be no clear reason for quoting the last sentence in Hebrew, the former two sentences are quite famous and are used in many Muslim and non-Muslim refutations of the divinity of Jesus. It is therefore possible that the author copied these sentences from other writers. Chidiac, moreover, considers that the author did not have a thorough knowledge either of Hebrew or Coptic, for all three quotations are inaccurate.[49]

After discussing the external and internal evidence, we are now in a position to draw some conclusions.

Did al-Ghazālī compose Al-radd al-jamīl?

In answering this question we need first to look at the content of the *Radd* and compare some crucial passages to closely related sections in some of al-Ghazālī's known works. The aim here is not only to demonstrate the relationship between this work and other works of al-Ghazālī, but also to point out the similarities in argumentation in both his philosophical and Ṣūfī works.

Before starting our task we need to refer briefly to the introduction of the *Radd* in order to provide grounds for accepting Chidiac's suggestion that this work was written by one of al-Ghazālī's students. Examining the three available copies of the text, we first observe that there is no introduction, such as most Muslim and Christian writers provided to preface their works. Instead, the author begins his text with the three words '*wa bihi thiqatī*' (in whom I trust), followed by the formula of praising God and his Prophet Muḥammad, the best of His creation. The author then immediately embarks on his discussion. Even though at the end of the work the author briefly

[49] Ibid, see also Chidiac, *Al-radd*, p. 32.

dedicates the work to God and whoever desires to follow the guidance of the light of God, none of the three copies has a colophon to give information about the writing or copying of the text. The lack of any form of introduction or a colophon at the end supports Chidiac's suggestion that the work consists of lecture notes.

Comparing the *Radd* with other works of al-Ghazālī, Wilms shows that it has some similarities with his two other polemical works which were probably written shortly before. He explains that the author of the *Radd* is clearly interested in discussing the heart of the matter, which is the Christian interpretation of Jesus' nature and his experience of union with God by which he himself became God. Instead of insisting on the humanity of Jesus, as other Muslim polemicists had before him, he goes to the root of the problem and provides proofs that, while it is possible to have union with God, it is logically impossible to become God. Another feature which relates this work to other polemical works by al-Ghazālī, as Wilms explains, is that the author covers all the possible logical arguments and thus closes all the doors to his opponents. Finally, in his other polemical works referred to above, al-Ghazālī uses irony and directs deeply insulting accusations against his rivals; there are numerous examples of these devices in the *Radd*, *Tahāfut* and *Faḍā'iḥ*.[50] Wilms also gives a list of expressions and sentences which compare with others in these works.[51]

There are many passages (see below) that support Wilms' proposal. The author explains that those who have a smattering of the rational sciences follow blindly (*taqlīd*) the Philosopher (presumably Aristotle?) in his concept of the union between the soul and the body and draw analogies from this concept to explain the union between Jesus and God. Therefore, he says,

> They are mistaken, because analogy is the referring of some particular to a general principle on account of some common cause on which the judgment depends. But what is the cause in this case, which could be held to be applicable to the essence of the Creator, so as to make the analogy right in His case?[52]

Then he asks, 'Who knows what the relation between the body and

[50] Wilms, *Al-Ghazālīs Schrift*, pp. 25-30.
[51] Ibid, pp. 37-9.
[52] Sweetman, *Theology*, p. 263.

soul is, so that it may be used as one element of the analogy over against the relation of the divine and human in Christ?'[53]

Here one cannot miss the characteristic of al-Ghazālī's argument, which we know from the *Tahāfut,* of frequently demanding the proof of his opponents' contention and accusing them of following Greek philosophers in religious matters which cannot be proved in the same way that mathematical and physical propositions are. The author is also challenging the Christians to accept other parts of Greek philosophy if they want to accept the analogy of the soul and the body:

> But anyone who holds a view like this must also follow (*yuqallid*) the philosophers with regard to other matters, e.g., that prophethood can be acquired, that the universe is eternal and not susceptible to generation and corruption, that the Creator does not know particulars, that there proceeds from the One nothing but one, that the God of Creation is an abstract essence, that in His essence there does not subsist knowledge, life or power, and the other matters in which they have contradicted revealed religion and declared the prophets sent from God to be untrue.[54]

Here the author is clearly presenting the main themes of the *Tahāfut*; this even suggests that the *Tahāfut* was written at a time close to the writing of the *Radd*.

On another occasion, in his discussion of the possibility that God created the body of Christ and was united with it, the author puts a rhetorical question: 'If God cannot be attributed with any contingent quality, then He cannot be the Creator since the creation of every new creature would a new attribute be acquired to God?'[55] A similar question was formulated by al-Ghazālī in the *Tahāfut* to express the philosophers' claim that God cannot create every contingent thing, for this will attribute contingent qualities to the Divine. Here the author gives the same answer as that given by al-Ghazālī in his *Tahāfut:*

> What is meant by Allāh being a Creator is His fore-ordination (*taqdīr*) of creation in eternity and so this attribute of being a Creator is positive in Him from all eternity; when He creates a creature, His knowledge of its existence at the time He created it and the power He had to produce it at that time also, were externally positive (*thābit*) and noth-

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[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., p. 266.
[55] Chicliac. *Al-radd.* p. 28.

> ing was originated except the creature's existence, which is not an attribute subsisting in the eternal essence of God.[56]

In this passage the author is expressing the idea that God determined in eternity the creation of the world in all its details and so when he actually created the world nothing new happened except that his creatures were brought into existence. Ibn Rushd challenged this idea in his *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* and explained that eternal knowledge cannot know the changing particular, even if this particular is itself eternal.[57]

Another feature which connects the *Radd* to al-Ghazālī is the occurrence of passages which refer to Ṣūfism. The author of the *Radd* is clearly interested in discussing the possibilities of union between God and Jesus but rejects the idea that the two became one. He bases his arguments on the subject of a union between God and Jesus on the Gospel of John, which is distinguished by its metaphorical and esoteric nature. Throughout the discussion, we realise that he by no means rejects the concept of union (*ittiḥād*), but disagrees with the meaning given to it by Christians that the two become one. He repeats in the *Radd* that union with God is not exclusively and solely attributed to Jesus: many other saints and prophets have also experienced it. Moreover, the sense of intoxication which is connected with the experience of glimpsing this union and which had led some Ṣūfīs to the same confusion, is not restricted to Christ. Even

> some great individuals have fallen into error here. They have said, 'Glory be to me' or another, 'How great is my dignity.' Al-Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj said, 'I am Allāh' and 'There is nothing in my gown except Allāh..' This has been accounted for as issuing from them in the mystical experience (*aḥwāl*) which saints have and which diverts them from the usual reservations of speech so that some people have said, 'These persons are intoxicated and the talk of drunken men ought to be concealed and not divulged.'[58]

Al-Ghazālī explains the experience of union in this same way in the treatises *Iḥyā'* and *Mishkāt* and refers many times to saints' experiences of union. Although he admires them, he condemns them for not concealing their moment of divine intoxication, which should

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[56] Sweetman, *Theology*, p. 280.
[57] Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*, ed. S. Donia, Cairo, 1999, pp. 643-76.
[58] Sweetman, *Theology*, p. 288.

have been hidden from public view. The same text is to be found in *Mishkāt*.[59]

In describing the experience of indwelling, the author gives an example of this experience with a ḥadīth:

> The prince of the apostles (Muḥammad), on whom be blessing and peace, said as from God: 'Of those drawn near (to God) no one draws nearer to Me than those who fulfil what I make obligatory to them. Then the servant (*'abd*) ceases not to draw nearer unto me by means of supererogatory prayers, until I love him. And when I love him I am his ears by which he hears and his sight by which sees, his tongue by which he speaks and his hand by which he grips.' But it is impossible that the Creator should indwell in each of these members, or that God meant them actually.[60]

The author's choice of this ḥadīth here to express the experience of indwelling is quite remarkable, because it is known to have been used by Ṣūfīs for the same purpose and al-Ghazālī brings this ḥadīth into his discussion of this experience in many places in the *Iḥyā'* and *Mishkāt*.[61] In the *Iḥyā'* he holds that it expresses the full identification of the Ṣūfī's will with God's will. However, when al-Ghazālī mentions this ḥadīth in the *Mishkāt* we become uncertain whether he means more than simply the total identification of the will. This could relate the *Radd* to al-Ghazālī's works within the period of his early work, the *Iḥyā'*, begun during his stay in Jerusalem before his unconfirmed visit to Egypt.

The last passage I have chosen in this context is the author's presentation of an important biblical passage on the indwelling experience from John 17.22. Here he totally accepts the experience of indwelling, although not to be interpreted as becoming God but rather experienced as light and mystical illumination. He says in his elaboration of John's statement, 'Because he has given us his Spirit', that this means '(God) has poured upon us (*afāḍa*) a (divine) secret and (His) providence, by which we have learned what is appropriate to His Glory and has then enabled us to act in accordance with it so that we want only what he wants and love what he loves.'[62] The whole sentence clearly comes from a Ṣūfī mind, as is indicated by

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[59] Al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt*, p. 12.
[60] Sweetman, *Theology*, p. 268-9.
[61] Al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt*, p. 15.
[62] Chidiac, *Al-radd*, p. 16 (my translation).

the use of such terms as *fāḍa* (poured upon) and *sirr* (divine secret) in connection with this experience of indwelling.

To conclude, I have attempted in this paper to discuss the major themes raised in this book, its importance as a polemical work which refutes the concept of the divinity of Jesus, and its connection with the Ṣūfī understanding of this concept. In the course of this discussion I have shown that the external evidence against attributing this work to al-Ghazālī, though significant, cannot prove that al-Ghazālī could not have written the book. The book is mentioned and quoted by the thirteenth-century scholar Ibn al-Ṭayyib, who himself is probably quoting from a Muslim work which seems to pre-date the thirteenth century. The possibility that al-Ghazālī had visited Egypt is granted by five historians, so the possibility of this visit cannot be rejected out of hand. The internal evidence, however, sheds a clearer light on the question of authorship. Although the style may not typically be that of Ghazālī, the arguments and the thought behind the book prove, as is shown by the above passages, to be very similar to al-Ghazālī's argumentation in the *Tahāfut* and other works of his. The accusation that he does not demonstrate any biblical knowledge in other works cannot be taken as grounds for believing that he did not write this work, since al-Ghazālī did not write any other works in which such knowledge was in any way required; nor did he write any other work directed to Christians or Jews. However, it is hardly possible that al-Ghazālī would have written such a polemical work, directed to a very knowledgeable audience as the *Radd* seems to be, without having carried out a thorough background study. This was his practice in two of his other works, *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* and *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*.

Yet, though I read the *Radd* with great pleasure, I do not find it an unusually original work or see that it does more than simply refer to many passages from the New and Old Testaments. Nor is the depth of the argument very innovative; rather it brings in a traditional Ṣūfī argument which is consonant with the period in which al-Ghazālī could have written this work, before his late Gnostic mystical period.

The above discussion demonstrates the reasons which made scholars such as Massignon, Chidiac, Arberry, Abū Rīdah, Wilms, Padwick, Hourani and Sweetman accept this book as al-Ghazālī's without much discussion about the authorship problem. Chidiac's explanation that the book was probably originally delivered in the

form of lectures and written by one of his students can be supported by the fact that it has no long introduction, unlike most books by respected authors of the time, who used the introduction to explain the content of the book after a long prayer and dedication. The lack of a colophon at the end of all three manuscripts also supports the likelihood that it was a set of lectures and not a book written at its author's dictation.

Finally, al-Sharfī informs us in his book *Al-fikr al-islāmī fī al-radd ʿalā al-Naṣārā* that most of the important early Muslim theologians and philosophers wrote a book or a treatise refuting, discussing or explaining Christian and Jewish beliefs and concepts, and that most of these are lost. Thus, if it is logical to include al-Ghazālī in the list of such authors, then the book which he would have written can only be *Al-radd al-jamīl li-ilāhiyyat ʿĪsā bi-ṣarīḥ al-Inǰīl.*

ḤANBALITE COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE: ANALYSIS OF NAJM AL-DĪN AL-ṬŪFĪ'S (D. 716/1316) *AL-TAʿLĪQ*

LEJLA DEMIRI

Ever since the very early encounters between Muslims and Christians polemics and apologetics have been written on both sides. However, Najm al-Dīn Sulaymān b. ʿAbd al-Qawī al-Ṭūfī's (d. 716/1316) work entitled *Al-taʿlīq ʿalā al-Anājīl al-arbaʿa wa-al-taʿlīq ʿalā al-Tawrāt wa-ʿalā ghayrihā min kutub al-anbiyā'* (*Critical Commentary on the Four Gospels, Torah and Other Books of the Prophets*)[1] is distinct among this literature, being composed specifically as a commentary on the Bible. Written with polemical intentions, this work contains al-Ṭūfī's critical comments and annotations on the Bible. In it he covers the four Gospels from the New Testament, while from the Old Testament the text deals with Genesis, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Jonah, Habakkuk and Malachi. Since there have been no studies exploring al-Ṭūfī's role and impact on Muslim-Christian dialogue and polemics, I hope this short paper, focusing on one of his works, will shed some light on al-Ṭūfī's contribution to Muslim understanding of Christianity in the Middle Ages.

A short introduction to his life and work will be presented first, followed by a description of the time and circumstances in which al-Ṭūfī wrote his commentary. Then a detailed discussion of al-Ṭūfī's views regarding certain Christian beliefs will follow. It will be shown that despite the similarities between the arguments employed by earlier polemicists and those of al-Ṭūfī, there is a striking originality in his approach and understanding of the relevant issues.

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[1] A critical edition of the text—which is a part of my ongoing PhD dissertation—has been prepared based on the two extant manuscripts, both of which are located in the libraries in Istanbul, the first in Süleymaniye, Şehid Ali Paşa (no. 2315/4) and the second in Köprülü (no. 795/2). I would like to express my profound indebtedness to both libraries for providing me with the copies of the MSS examined in this study.

Who was al-Ṭūfī?

Sulaymān b. ʿAbd al-Qawī b. ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Saʿīd, al-Ṭūfī al-Ṣarṣarī al-Baghdādī al-Ḥanbalī, Najm al-Dīn Abū al-Rabīʿ[2] was a Ḥanbalī theologian, jurist, poet and—like many other Ḥanbalite scholars—a very prolific author. He wrote extensively in various fields such as *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *ḥadīth*, *ʿaqā'id*, *tafsīr*, *shiʿr, jadal* and others. Over fifty works are attributed to al-Ṭūfī by his biographers[3] among which only eleven are published so far.[4] He was born in the 670/1270ies[5]

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[2] He is called al-Ṭūkhī by ʿUlaymī in his *Al-uns al-jalīl bi-ta'rīkh al-Quds wa-al-Khalīl*, Najaf, 1388/1968, vol. II, p. 257, while Bābānī Ismāʿīl Bāshā al-Baghdādī calls him both al-Ṭūfī and al-Ṭūkhī in his *Hadiyyat al-ʿārifīn asmā' al-mu'allifīn wa-āthār al-muṣannifīn*, ed. K.R. Bilge and İ.M.K. İnal, Istanbul, 1951, vol. I, p. 400. Ḥājjī Khalīfa also adds al-Qudsī, and in another occasion al-Maqdisī, in his *Kashf al-zunūn ʿan asāmī al-kutub wa-al-funūn*, ed. Ş. Yaltkaya and K.R. Bilge, Istanbul, 1941-3, pp. 756 and 1738.

[3] Ibn Rajab lists 31 works of al-Ṭūfī (cf. Ibn Rajab, *Kitāb al-dhayl ʿalā ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqī, Cairo, 1372/1952, vol. II, pp. 367-8) and ʿUlaymī about 33 (see *Al-uns al-jalīl*, vol. II, pp. 257-8). There are some 30 works mentioned in *Hadiyyat al-ʿārifīn*, vol. I, pp. 400-1, and also some 26 works in various parts of *Kashf al-ẓunūn*, while al-Ṣafadī mentions only seven of them (cf. *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr wa-aʿwān al-naṣr*, ed. ʿAlī Abū Zayd *et al.*, Beirut, 1418/1998, vol. II, pp. 446-7).

[4] *Al-iksīr fī ʿilm al-tafsīr*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Ḥusayn, Cairo, 1977; *Al-intiṣārāt al-islāmiyya fī ʿilm muqāranat al-adyān*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā, Cairo, 1983; another edition of the same work, *Al-intiṣārāt al-islāmiyya fī kashf shubah al-naṣrāniyya*, ed. Sālim b. Muḥammad al-Qarnī, 2 vols, Riyadh, 1999; *ʿAlam al-jadhal fī ʿilm al-jadal. Das Banner der Fröhlichkeit über die Wissenschaft vom Disput*, ed. W. Heinrichs, Weisbaden, 1987; *Al-bulbul fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. Saʿīd Muḥammad Laḥḥām, Beirut, 1420/1999; *Sharḥ mukhtaṣar al-rawḍa*, ed. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī, 3 vols, Beirut, 1987-9; *Sharḥ mukhtaṣar al-rawḍa*, ed. Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbd al-ʿĀlī Ibrāhīm, 3 vols, Riyadh, 1409/1989; *Tafsīr suwar qāf, al-qiyāma, al-naba', al-inshiqāq, al-ṭāriq*, ed. ʿAlī Ḥusayn al-Bawwāb, Riyadh, 1992; *Mawā'id al-ḥays fī fawā'id Imri' al-Qays*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿUlayyān, Amman, 1994; *Al-saʿqa al-ghaḍabiyya fī al-radd ʿalā munkirī al-ʿArabiyya*, ed. Muḥammad b. Khālid al-Fāḍil, Riyadh, 1417/1997; *Kitāb al-taʿyīn fī sharḥ al-arbaʿīn*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥajj Muḥammad ʿUthmān, Beirut and Mecca, 1998. Excerpts from this work have been published several times; cf. n. 36 for details. Other edited and published works of al-Ṭūfī are his theological commentary on the Qur'an entitled *Al-ishārāt al-ilāhiyya ilā al-mabāḥith al-uṣūliyya*, ed. Abū ʿĀṣim Ḥasan b. ʿAbbās b. Quṭb, 3 vols, Cairo, 2002, and a work on *ʿilm al-kalām* called *Dar' al-qawl al-qabīḥ bi-al-taḥsīn wa-al-taqbīḥ*, ed. Ayman M. Shihadeh, Riyadh, 1425/2005.

[5] According to Ibn Rajab he was born in 670/1271-2 and some (*biḍʿ*) years (cf. *Al-dhayl*, vol. II, p. 366). The same date is accepted by Ibn al-ʿImād (cf. *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*, Cairo, 1351/1932, vol. VI, p. 39) and by ʿUlaymī (see *Al-uns al-jalīl*, vol. II, p. 257). However, other biographers give various precise dates such as 670/1271-2 (cf. Bābānī, *Hadiyyat al-ʿārifīn*, vol. I, p. 400) and 657/1258-9 (cf. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Al-durar al-kāmina*, Hyderabad, 1349/1930, vol. II, pp. 154-7; Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *Al-aʿlām: qāmūs tarājim li-ashhar al-rijāl wa-al-nisā' min al-ʿarab*

in a village called Ṭūfā,[6] a district of Ṣarṣar near Baghdād,[7] and died in Rajab 716/September-October 1316 in Hebron.[8]

His educational journey began in his home village of Ṭūfā, then continued in Ṣarṣar, and from 691/1292 onwards in Baghdād. Subsequently, in 704/1304-5 he traveled to Damascus where he met, among others, Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya, and according to biographers sat with him, i.e. attended his circles (*jālasahum*).[9] This has been understood by some contemporary researchers as a master-disciple relationship. Thus, according to them al-Ṭūfī 'took knowledge' from Ibn Taymiyya[10] and studied with him.[11] In 705/1305-6 he left for Egypt and settled in Cairo where he was appointed as a repetitor

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wa-al-mustaʿribīn wa-al-mustashriqīn, Cairo, 1954-9, vol. III, p. 189; and ʿUmar Riḍā Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam al-muʾallifīn: tarājim muṣannifī al-kutub al-ʿarabiyya*, Damascus, 1957, vol. III, p. 266). This last date of 657/1258-9 does not seem to be accurate since an early source (al-Yāfiʿī, *Mirʾāt al-jinān wa-ʿibrat al-yaqẓān fī maʿrifat mā yuʿtabar min hawādith al-zamān*, Beirut, 1390/1970, vol. IV, p. 255) notes that he died as a middle-aged man (*kahlan*), i.e. some time between the ages of 30 and 50 (for the meaning of *kahlan*, see Ibn al-Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, Beirut, 1375/1956, vol. XI, p. 600).

[6] While Ibn Ḥajar calls it Ṭūf (cf. *Al-durar al-kāmina*, vol. II, p. 154), ʿUlaymī calls it Ṭūkhā (cf. *Al-uns al-jalīl*, vol. II, p. 257).

[7] There were two towns in the vicinity of Baghdad, Upper Ṣarṣar and Lower Ṣarṣar, both of them located on the bank of the river ʿĪsā, which was also called the river of Ṣarṣar. For further information see Shihāb al-Dīn Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥamawī al-Rūmī al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb muʿjam al-buldān*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, Frankfurt, 1994, vol. III/1, p. 381.

[8] Ibn Rajab, *Al-dhayl*, vol. II, p. 369; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol. VI, p. 40; Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-durar al-kāmina*, vol. II, p. 156; al-Ziriklī, *Al-aʿlām*, vol. III, p. 189. The same date is given by al-Yāfiʿī, *Mirʾāt al-jinān*, vol. IV, p. 255; al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-ʿārifīn*, vol. I, pp. 400-1 and Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam al-muʾallifīn*, vol. III, p. 266. However, according to another view he died in Rajab 710/November-December 1310 (see al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr*, vol. II, p. 446; ʿUlaymī, *Al-uns al-jalīl*, vol. II, p. 258 and Ḥājjī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-ẓunūn*).

[9] Ibn Rajab, *Al-dhayl*, vol. II, p. 366; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol. VI, p. 39; and ʿUlaymī, *Al-uns al-jalīl*, vol. II, p. 257. However, Ibn al-ʿImād and ʿUlaymī mention only that al-Ṭūfī met Ibn Taymiyya and do not give any further details about whether he studied with him or not. From among modern authors ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Khallāf—apparently relying on this biographical data—says that al-Ṭūfī, 'came together with Ibn Taymiyya during his visit to Damascus' (ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Khallāf, *Maṣādir al-tashrīʿ al-islāmī fī mā lā naṣṣa fīhi*, Kuwait, 1402/1982, p. 96).

[10] Muḥammad Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal: ḥayātuh wa-ʿaṣruh, ārāʾuh wa-fiqhuh*, Cairo, 1981, pp. 324-6.

[11] W.P. Heinrichs, 'al-Ṭūfī', *EI*^{2}, vol. X, p. 588. The same view is accepted by D. Gimaret in his review of al-Ṭūfī's *ʿAlam al-jadhal fī ʿilm al-jadal* (ed. W.P. Heinrichs) in *Bulletin Critique des Annales Islamologiques* 7, 1990, Cairo, p. 30.

(*muʿīd*)[12] at two schools: al-Manṣūriyya and al-Nāṣiriyya.[13]

We do not have a very clear picture of where al-Ṭūfī stands within the Ḥanbalite school, since there are aspects of his life and works that biographers such as al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1362), Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1393), Ibn al-ʿImād (d. 1089/1679) and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449) agree place him at odds with his contemporary Ḥanbalites. He was a controversial figure accused of being a Shīʿite/Rāfiḍite by some of his contemporaries. Ibn Rajab calls him 'a Shīʿite, who in matters of belief (*fī al-ʿiʿtiqād*) deviated from the Sunna'.[14] His biographers also mention that some satirical poems written against some of the Prophet's companions were attributed to him by his opponents.[15] As the result of an incident that had occurred between him and Sād al-Dīn al-Ḥārithī (Masʿūd b. Aḥmad b. Masʿūd, d. 711/1312),[16] the Ḥanbalite chief judge (*qāḍī al-quḍāt*), al-Ṭūfī was punished and beaten, imprisoned for a while and banned from his duty at schools.[17] However, al-Ṭūfī questions this accusation, defending himself sarcastically: 'A Ḥanbalite, Rāfiḍite, Ashʿarite? This is one of the most instructive (or mightiest) things ever', he says.[18]

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[12] George Makdisi defines the function of the *muʿīd*, whose post was referred to as *ʿāda*, 'repetition', as being to 'repeat the law lesson of the mudariss, to explain it so that it was understood by the students. He could himself be a graduate student, or an accomplished jurisconsult without his own chair of law.' Also, 'the mu'id in law was able to go from the mere drilling of the students in the lesson delivered by the professor of law to furnishing the students with his own notes, remarks and observations' (G. Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West*, Edinburgh, 1981, pp. 193, 214)

[13] Ibn Rajab, *Al-dhayl*, vol. II, p. 367; also ʿUlaymī, *Al-uns al-jalīl*, vol. II, p. 257.

[14] Ibn Rajab, *Al-dhayl*, vol. II, p. 368. The same description is repeated by Ibn al-ʿImād in *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol. VI, p. 39.

[15] Al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr*, vol. II, p. 446; Ibn Rajab, *Al-dhayl*, vol. II, pp. 369-70; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol. VI, pp. 39-40; Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-durar al-kāmina*, vol. II, p. 154; al-Suyūṭī, *Bughyat al-wuʿāt fī ṭabaqāt al-lughawiyyīn wa-al-nuḥāh*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo, 1384/1964, vol. I, p. 599.

[16] For his biography see al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr*, vol. V, pp. 416-17 and Ibn Rajab, *Al-dhayl*, vol. II, pp. 362-4.

[17] Al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr*, vol. II, p. 446; Ibn Rajab, *Al-dhayl*, vol. II, p. 369; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol. VI, p. 40; Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-durar al-kāmina*, vol. II, p. 156. Cf. also al-Suyūṭī, *Bughyat al-wuʿāt*, vol. I, p. 599.

[18] '*Ḥanbalī, Rāfiḍī, Ashʿarī, hādhihī aḥad al-ʿibar*' (cf. Ibn Rajab, *Al-dhayl*, vol. II, p. 368). A slightly different version is '*Ashʿarī, Ḥanbalī, Rāfiḍī, hādhihī iḥdā al-ʿibar*' (cf. Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol. VI, p. 39). Yet another is '*Ḥanbalī, Rāfiḍī, Ẓāhirī, Ashʿarī, innahā iḥdā al-kibar*' (cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-durar al-kāmina*, vol. II, p. 155). In this last

Although it was said that he later repented and returned to orthodoxy,[19] Ibn Rajab does not accept his repentance to be genuine. According to him al-Ṭūfī's repentance was simply out of his dissimulation (*taqiyya*) and hypocrisy (*nifāq*), since his companion in Medina during the last period of his life was a certain Rāfiḍite scholar (*shaykh*) called al-Sakkākīnī (Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr b. Abū al-Qasam al-Hamadhānī al-Dimashqī al-Sakkākīnī, d. 721/1321), who was a Muʿtazilite.[20] Following these lines, even some modern authors have seen him as a Shiʿite who appeared to be and presented himself as a Ḥanbalite. Thus, although he wrote his works as a Ḥanbalite *faqīh*, he spread his Shiʿite ideas throughout his writings.[21] According to this view there is a direct connection between al-Ṭūfī's theory of *maṣlaḥa* (public interest) and his adherence to Shiʿism. For Muḥammad Abū Zahra, al-Ṭūfī's understanding of *maṣlaḥa* is a result of his Shiʿite leanings.[22] However, in order to determine his relation to Sunnī or Shiʿite Islam, a thorough study of al-Ṭūfī's theological commentary on the Qurʾan, *Al-ishārāt al-ilāhiyya ilā al-mabāḥith al-uṣūliyya*, would be required. Most especially, research on his understanding of *imāma* may give us some useful data on this question.

Al-Ṭūfī's attitude towards Sufism is another aspect of his biography which needs to be considered. He was known for his austerity and renunciation; one of his biographers portrayed him wearing 'a garment of ascetics' (*fī ziyy ahl al-faqr*).[23] Another source described him as a person who 'was moderate in his clothes and actions' and who 'showed little heed to the world'.[24] Additionally, in one of his

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version, he is apparently using the same pattern as that of the qurʾanic verse: *innahā la-iḥdā al-kibar* (Q 74.35).

[19] Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-durar al-kāmina*, vol. II, p. 155.

[20] Ibn Rajab, *Al-dhayl*, vol. II, p. 369, 370. For the life and work of Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr al-Hamadhānī al-Sakkākīnī, cf. Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol. VI, pp. 55-6.

[21] Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, pp. 325-6.

[22] Ibid., pp. 324-5. For a similar approach, cf. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī, *Maqālāt al-Kawtharī*, Hims, 1388/1968, pp. 119-21 and 333.

[23] This is quoted by Ibn Rajab from Tāj al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Maktūm al-Qaysī (cf. *Al-dhayl*, vol. II, p. 369). The same quotation from Ibn Maktūm's *Taʾrīkh al-nuḥāt* is given by Ibn Ḥajar in his *Al-durar al-kāmina*, vol. II, p. 156.

[24] Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-durar al-kāmina*, vol. II, p. 154. Ibn Ḥajar also quotes al-Dhahabī's words that al-Ṭūfī was 'pious, calm and modest' (see *Al-durar al-kāmina*, vol. II, p. 155).

works al-Ṭūfī uses the phrase 'some jurisprudents from among our companions, the *Jīlānīs*' (*baʿḍ fuqahāʾ aṣḥābinā al-Jīlāniyyīn*),[25] because of which Wolfhart P. Heinrichs thinks 'it would seem possible to identify him as a Qādirī'.[26] All these comments, in one way or another, imply that he has direct connections with Sufism. Here one is reminded that Ḥanbalism—which Henri Laoust rightly calls 'a movement of profound diversity'[27]—while being generally hostile to speculative theology (*kalām*) and to esoteric Sufism, did not develop in complete isolation. In fact a great number of Ḥanbalite authors were themselves among the *mutakallimūn* and Sufis.[28]

It is significant to observe the way in which al-Ṭūfī either fits into or contradicts the Ḥanbalite school of thought with regard not only to Sufism but also to speculative theology (*kalām)*, bearing in mind that one of his lost works was in defence of logic and speculative theology (*Dafʿ/Rafʿ al-malām ʿan ahl al-manṭiq wa-al-kalām)*,[29] which differentiates him from most other Ḥanbalites, who were not in favour of *ʿilm al-kalām*. One may contrast al-Ṭūfī's view with that of the founder of this school of law and theology, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), who had gone to the extent of disapproving of all speculative theology (*kalām*) since he saw it to be a distortion of what was perfectly expressed in the Book of God. Basically his argument was built on the assumption that the Prophet and his companions were not known to have practised such an idle speculation as theology (*kalām*).[30]

Al-Ṭūfī is also the author of several other works that could be listed as unique and original examples of their own kinds. For example, his *ʿAlam al-jadhal fī ʿilm al-jadal*[31] is a study which analyses qur'anic verses of debate (*nuṣūṣ al-munāẓarāt*) from the point of principles of the art of disputation and dialectics (*qawāʿid al-jadal wa-al-munāẓara*), which al-Suyūṭī finds to be a unique example of the genre of *Jadal al-Qur'ān*.[32] Al-Ṭūfī also wrote a separate work on the question

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[25] *ʿAlam al-jadhal*, p. 53.
[26] Heinrichs, 'al-Ṭūfī', p. 589.
[27] H. Laoust, 'Ḥanābila', *EI²*, vol. III, p. 160.
[28] Ibid., p. 158.
[29] Al-Ṭūfī refers to this work in his *Al-ishārāt al-ilāhiyya*, vol. III, p. 305. I owe this reference to Heinrichs, 'al-Ṭūfī', p. 588.
[30] Cf. G.F. Hourani, *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics*, Cambridge, 1985, p. 7.
[31] Cf. n. 4.
[32] Abū al-Faḍl Jalāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Abū Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Al-itqān fī ʿulūm*

of *al-taḥsīn wa-al-taqbīḥ* (i.e. determining what is good and what is detestable)—one of the key issues discussed in both *uṣūl al-dīn* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* literature—entitled *Dar' al-qawl al-qabīḥ bi-al-taḥsīn wa-al-taqbīḥ*. According to Ayman M. Shihadeh, who has recently edited this valuable work, this is the sole work of its kind deriving from Sunni circles, although there have been some short treatises of a comparable type written by Zaydite authors.[33] We may also mention al-Ṭūfī's *tafsīr* on the Qurʾan, *Al-ishārāt al-ilāhiyya ilā al-mabāḥith al-uṣūliyya*,[34] which is considered to be his last work.[35] In it his main goal is to read the Qurʾan from the *uṣūl al-dīn* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* standpoints. Additionally, al-Ṭūfī is well known for his extremely broad notion of *al-maṣlaḥa al-mursala* (public interest, human welfare), which he described and explained when commenting on the hadith: 'There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm' (*lā ḍarar wa-lā ḍirār*), in his *Sharḥ* on al-Nawawī's *Arbaʿīn*.[36] He argued for the priority of *naṣṣ* (i.e. authoritative text: Qurʾan and Sunna) and *ijmāʿ* (consensus) in the realm of *ʿibādāt* (i.e. acts of worship) and *muqaddarāt* (i.e. fixed ordinances), while in the field of *muʿāmalāt* (i.e.

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al-Qurʾān, Beirut, 1407/1987, vol. II, p. 293. However, according to some authors, al-Ṭūfī's intention was not to create such a genre. Many previous commentators (*mufassirūn*) preceded him with their commentaries and interpretations. What sets al-Ṭūfī apart from them and makes him original is that he dedicates the entire fifth chapter of his work to this purpose. Nevertheless, he applies the methodology of *al-jadal* to the qurʾanic text and not *vice versa*. (Nāṣir ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Muwāfī, 'Fann al-munāẓara ʿinda Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī. Dirāsāt fī kitāb «ʿAlam al-jadhal fī ʿilm al-jadal»', *Majallat Kulliyyat al-Ādāb: Jāmiʿat al-Qāhira* 60, 2000, pp. 67-8.)

[33] Cf. his introduction to *Dar' al-qawl al-qabīḥ*, p. 13.

[34] Cf. n. 4.

[35] Cf. Muṣṭafā Zayd, *Al-maṣlaḥa fī al-tashrīʿ al-islāmī wa-Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī*, Cairo, 1384/1964, p. 186; Heinrichs, 'al-Ṭūfī', p. 589.

[36] *Kitāb al-taʿyīn fī sharḥ al-arbaʿīn*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥajj Muḥammad ʿUthmān, Beirut/Mecca, 1998. The relevant text was published with annotations by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī, 'Risāla fī al-maṣāliḥ al-mursala', *Majmūʿ rasāʾil fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, Beirut, 1324/1906, pp. 37-70. It was republished by Rashīd Riḍā, 'Adillat al-sharʿ wa-taqdīm al-maṣlaḥa fī al-muʿāmalāt ʿalā al-naṣṣ', *Al-Manār* 9, 1324/1906, pp. 745-70. Further, the text was critically edited and analysed by Muṣṭafā Zayd in his *Al-maṣlaḥa fī al-tashrīʿ al-islāmī wa-Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī*, Cairo, 1384/1964. This last edition was also reprinted by ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Khallāf in his *Maṣādir al-tashrīʿ al-islāmī fī mā lā naṣṣa fīhi*, Kuwait, 1402/1982, pp. 105-44. Another recent edition is *Risāla fī riʿāyat al-maṣlaḥa*, ed. Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Sāyiḥ, Cairo, 1413/1993. There are also two Turkish translations of the text with introductions and notes, Kâşif Hamdi Okur, 'Nass ve Maslahat', in *Kur'an'ın Tarihsel ve Evrensel Okunuşu*, ed. M. Uyanık, Ankara, 1997, pp. 219-46 and S. Ateş, 'İslâm Hukuk Metodolojisinde Çok Önemli Bir Risâle', *Kur'ân Mesajı: İlmî Araştırmalar Dergisi* 22-4, 1999-2000, pp. 80-100.

transactions) the precedence should be given to *maṣlaḥa*. There have been many studies exploring his understanding of *maṣlaḥa*.[37] Al-Ṭūfī has even been identified as 'one of the greatest men in the world'[38] because of this theory, while some others have disapproved of his approach[39] and even severely criticized him.[40]

Even though he was controversial, al-Ṭūfī was also a man of his time, and his work clearly bears the marks of that age. His involvement with polemics and refutations clearly reflects how the interreligious climate was shaped by turbulent events in the social and political sphere of latter Crusade-period Egypt, where he most probably wrote his commentary. This was a dynamic time for polemics and apologetics written by both Muslims and Christians throughout the West and the East. In addition, relations between these two communities at the level of everyday-life are noteworthy. I think that al-Ṭūfī's life might illuminate the nature of interactions between Muslims and Christians more generally. There is a very remarkable piece of information about al-Ṭūfī's life in Upper Egypt available to us, although lacking in detail. All of the biographical

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[37] Some of them are A.M. al-Husayn al-Amiri, 'At-Tufi's refutation of traditional Muslim juristic sources of law and his view on the priority of regard for human welfare as the highest legal source or principle', PhD dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1982; N.H. Lubis, 'Al-Tufi's concept of maslaha: a study in Islamic legal theory (Najm al-Din al-Tufi)', MA thesis, McGill University, 1995; M. Koca, 'İslâm Hukukunda Maslahat-ı Mürsele ve Necmeddin et-Tûfî'nin Bu Konudaki Görüşlerinin Değerlendirilmesi', *İLAM Araştırma Dergisi* 1, 1996, pp. 93-122. Cf. also F.M.M. Opwis, 'Maslaha: an intellectual history of a core conception in Islamic legal theory', PhD dissertation, Yale University, 2001, pp. 194-245, and the analyses of Khallāf, *Maṣādir*, pp. 96-101; Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Shalabī, *Taʿlīl al-aḥkām: ʿarḍ wa-taḥlīl li-ṭarīqat al-tālīl wa-taṭawwurātihā fī ʿuṣūr al-ijtihād wa-al-taqlīd*, Beirut, 1401/1981, pp. 295-306; A. Şener, *İslam Hukukunun Kaynaklarından Kıyas, İstihsan ve İstislah*, Ankara, 1981, pp. 151-5; M. Erdoğan, *İslâm Hukukunda Ahkamın Değişmesi*, İstanbul, 1990, pp. 97-102.

[38] Al-Qāsimī, 'Risāla fī al-maṣāliḥ al-mursala', p. 38. For some other praising and supporting words directed at al-Ṭūfī cf. İ.H. İzmirli, *İlm-i Hilaf*, Istanbul, 1330/1912, pp. 100-5; Seyyid Bey, *Usuli Fıkıh Dersleri*, Istanbul, 1338/1919, vol. II, pp. 292-5.

[39] According to Muṣṭafā Aḥmad al-Zarqā, al-Ṭūfī's extreme understanding of *maṣlaḥa* would lead to nullifying the *sharīʿa* and to chaos in Islamic law (cf. his *Al-fiqh al-islāmī fī thawbihi al-jadīd: al-madkhal al-fiqhī al-ʿāmm*, Damascus, 1967-8, vol. I, p. 117). For more criticisms, cf. also Muḥammad Abū Zahra, *Mālik: ḥayātuh wa-ʿaṣruh, ārāʾuh wa-fiqhuh*, Cairo, 1952, pp. 311, 329-34; Abū Zahra, *Ibn Ḥanbal*, pp. 316-26; Saʿīd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī, *Ḍawābiṭ al-maṣlaḥa fī al-sharīʿa al-islāmiyya*, Beirut, 1402/1982, pp. 202-15.

[40] Cf. al-Kawtharī who questioned al-Ṭūfī's orthodoxy in his *Maqālāt al-Kawtharī*, pp. 119-21, 331-6.

sources mention that after he had been imprisoned and banned from teaching he spent a period of time in Qūṣ, a Christian town in Upper Egypt,[41] and according to some of the sources he even took up residence with some Christians.[42]

Why did al-Ṭūfī write his commentary on the Bible?

Al-Ṭūfī was prompted to write this work in response to a Christian refutation of Islam written in this period, which—according to the manuscript in Süleymaniye, Şehid Ali Paşa—was called *Al-sayf al-murhaf fī al-radd ʿalā al-Muṣḥaf* (*The Sharp Sword in Refuting the Qur'an*). Before writing his apology for Islam called *Al-intiṣārāt al-islāmiyya fī kashf shubah al-naṣrāniyya*[43] (*Islamic Defences in Uncovering Specious Christian Arguments*) as a reply to this Christian anti-Islamic polemic, he decided first to show 'the deficiencies of Christianity'; hence his commentary on the Bible. The first few folios comprise an introduction, which is not titled, in which al-Ṭūfī describes his motivations for writing *Al-taʿlīq* and the principles he relied upon. Here are some of his words illustrating his intentions,

> I have noticed that a certain Christian wrote a book defaming the religion of Islam and slandering the prophethood of Muḥammad, peace be upon him. This makes those weak in religion, who lack the ability to differentiate, doubt. Thus, I have thought to refute this and to offer proofs which will undermine what this book holds. Therefore, I have decided to say a word about the four Gospels first, so that this may damage their opinions and make my soul feel relieved.[44]

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[41] Ibn Rajab, *Al-dhayl*, vol. II, p. 367, 369; also Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol. VI, p. 40.

[42] '*Nazala ʿinda baʿḍ al-naṣārā*' (cf. al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr*, vol. II, p. 446 and Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-durar al-kāmina*, vol. II, p. 154-5). Brockelmann mentions that al-Ṭūfī 'lived in a house of a Christian' when he moved to Qūṣ (*Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur*, Leiden, 1949, vol. II, p. 132). Also, according to C. Gilliot, al-Ṭūfī took refuge with a Christian in Qūṣ ('Textes arabes anciens édités en Égypte au cours des années 1992 à 1994', *MIDEO* 22, 1994, p. 393).

[43] There are two editions: the first, *Al-intiṣārāt al-islāmiyya fī ʿilm muqāranat al-adyān*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā, Cairo, 1983, was reviewed by G.C. Anawati in 'Textes arabes anciens édités en égypte au cours des années 1985 à 1987', *MIDEO* 18, 1988, Cairo, pp. 292-5; the later and much better edition, which I am using in this paper, is *Al-intiṣārāt al-islāmiyya fī kashf shubah al-naṣrāniyya*, ed. Sālim b. Muḥammad al-Qarnī, Riyadh, 1999.

[44] *Al-taʿlīq*, f. 213a. All the references to *Al-taʿlīq* in this paper are based on the

Al-Ṭūfī strongly believes that his commentary is firmly demolishing the Christian religion and exposing all the disgrace and shame of the contradictions, absurdities, corruption and faults this tradition contains. To demolish what is already destroyed is like playing a game, and to obtain what already has been obtained brings fatigue, he says—citing a proverb which states, 'What significance has it to divorce a divorcee?' However, al-Ṭūfī holds firmly that false and fraudulent arguments should be uncovered under all circumstances. Finally, al-Ṭūfī hopes that after examining his commentary every intelligent and honest person in search of truth will turn away from the Christian religion towards the religion of primordial monotheism (i.e. the religion of Abraham, *al-millat al-Ḥanīfiyya*)—realizing that his former religion was nothing but a blasphemy and false and that up until that point he had been on the wrong way with no assistance.[45] However, al-Ṭūfī tells us that his main purpose in refuting Christianity is to protect the weak ones among Muslims from the erroneous Christian teachings when exposed to these teachings and to prevent them from delusion regarding Christian refutations of Islam.[46]

When did al-Ṭūfī write Al-taʿlīq?

There is no date given about when al-Ṭūfī wrote *Al-taʿlīq*. However, in the opening part of the work[47] he states explicitly that he had decided to write his refutation of Christianity, i.e. *Al-taʿlīq*, before his apology for Islam, which he later called *Al-intiṣārāt al-islāmiyya*. Furthermore, in *Al-intiṣārāt* he often refers to his *Taʿlīq*, saying on various occasions, 'as I have written/stated/proved/explained in *Al-taʿlīq*'.[48] Now we know that he wrote *Al-intiṣārāt* between 12 Shawwāl and 7 Dhī al-Qaʿda 707/4-29 April 1308 in Cairo;[49] consequently, the penning of *Al-taʿlīq* must have occurred before this date. Moreover, there is an internal datum which would help us to

Süleymaniye MS, Şehid Ali Paşa (no. 2315/4).

[45] Ibid., f. 213a.

[46] Ibid., f. 216b.

[47] Ibid., f. 213a.

[48] See *Al-intiṣārāt al-islāmiyya*, vol. I, pp. 232, 246, 248, 289, 294, 306, 313, 328, 350, 352, 382, 384, 499, etc.

[49] Ibid., vol. I, p. 167; vol. II, p. 758.

determine an approximate date, where al-Ṭūfī talks about how, 'The law (*nāmūs*) brought forth by Muḥammad has not vanished after his death. It has been flourishing and remaining in its splendour for 707 years and it will do so up till the Day of Judgment (*al-sāʿa*)'.[50] From this comment we may conclude that he wrote his *Commentary* in 707/1308, shortly before his apology, *Al-intiṣārāt*.

In consequence of this, the assertion that *Al-taʿlīq* was written during his residence in Qūṣ cannot be accurate,[51] since al-Ṭūfī moved there at a later date, after he had been banned from teaching in Cairo. In addition, the comment which some of the biographers make, that while he was living in Qūṣ 'he composed a book, some words of which were disapproved of, and consequently he changed it',[52] should be taken to refer to some other of al-Ṭūfī's works and not *Al-taʿlīq*.

Al-Ṭūfī's understanding of Christianity and the principles he relies upon when refuting it

1. *Christian scriptures*

Before starting to comment on the Bible, al-Ṭūfī provides the reader with some general information about Christianity. First of all, he says that the Gospels the Christians have are not identical to the Gospel given to Jesus. He calls these Gospels 'biographies (*siyar*) of Jesus compiled by his disciples', and considers them similar to stories about the expeditions of the Prophet Muḥammad (*maghāzī*) and his biographies (*siyar*) written by, for example, Ibn Isḥāq (d. 150/767), Mūsā b. ʿUqba (d. 141/758), al-Wāqidī (d. 207/823), al-Bakrī (d. 487/1094), Ibn Hishām (d. 213/828) and others.[53]

The Gospel given to Jesus, which al-Ṭūfī holds to be parallel to the Qurʾan, either disappeared, was lost and vanished like many other books (*al-ṣuḥuf*) of the prophets, or some parts have actually

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[50] *Al-taʿlīq*, f. 246b.

[51] See the editors' remark in the footnote 4 in al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr*, vol. II, p. 446.

[52] Al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr*, vol. II, p. 446; Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-durar al-kāmina*, vol. II, p. 157.

[53] *Al-taʿlīq*, f. 213 b.

been preserved in the parables (*al-amthāl*) and sayings (*al-ḥikam*) of Jesus present in the Gospels. Later on, the biographies were added to these and they were collectively called 'Gospels'. Thus, the greater part of what is contained in the Gospels is not Christ's words as such but rather narrations of their composers, as statements such as 'Jesus answered', 'Jesus did', and 'Jesus said' actually indicate.[54]

Accordingly, in al-Ṭūfī's eyes, the four Gospels, unlike the Qur'an, have no reliable and trustworthy transmission (*tawātur*). In their present form, therefore, these scriptures in their entirety cannot be considered truly divine revelations, although they do contain bits and pieces from the revelation given to Jesus. In his attitude towards the Christian scriptures, al-Ṭūfī heavily relies on the prophetic hadith which instructs the Muslims neither to confirm nor to disbelieve *ahl al-kitāb*, but to stick to their own belief as stated in Q 29.46: 'Say, "We believe in what was revealed to us and in what was revealed to you; our God and your God are one; we are devoted to Him."'[55] This hadith is understood by al-Ṭūfī as forbidding Muslims to confirm *ahl al-kitāb* lest they confirm what was twisted (i.e. *mā ḥurrifa*) and forbidding them to disbelieve Jews and Christians lest they deny the true revelation which has been preserved intact.[56]

2. *Trinity*

Later, al-Ṭūfī gives a short description of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, followed by his own refutation. He finds the analogy between the three hypostases (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and the three human faculties—soul (*nafs*), speech (*nuṭq*) and intellect (*ʿaql*)—to be erroneous. In al-Ṭūfī's terms, this is a false analogy (*qiyās*), because, first of all, in its technical form analogy should be connecting the *farʿ* (branch, i.e. new case) to the *aṣl* (root, i.e. original case),[57] but not *vice versa* as is the case in this proposition (*qaḍiyya*). Since God is the principle of everything, the final cause of all causes and the Creator of all that exists, it is inappropriate to make such an analogy. Secondly, analogy requires equality be-

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Shahādāt 30, Tafsīr sūrat al-Baqara 11, Iʿtiṣām 26, Tawḥīd 51; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, ʿIlm 2; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 4/136.

[56] Cf. *Al-intiṣārāt al-islāmiyya*, vol. I, pp. 231-2.

[57] "*Ilḥāq farʿ bi-aṣl*" (*Al-taʿlīq*, f. 214a).

tween the *maqīs* (the one compared) and the *maqīs ʿalayhi* (the one to which others are compared).[58] As there is no such parity in any way between a human soul, with its speech and intellect, and God himself, this analogy is denounced as wrong. Finally, referring to the Holy Spirit's appearance in the form of a dove, al-Ṭūfī understands the three hypostases to be self-subsisting substances (*jawāhir*), which is not the case with the human soul, speech and intellect; they are not substances but rather attributes (*ṣifāt*).[59]

Al-Ṭūfī refutes the definition of God that holds Him to be 'one in essence and three in attributes' (*wāḥid bi-al-dhāt muthallath bi-al-ṣifāt*), which he quotes from the opening part of the Gospel of Matthew, from a 'reliable/sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*) and accurate (*maḍbūṭ)* copy' he had seen. According to al-Ṭūfī, this is wrong for two reasons. Firstly, because when Christians refer to the Son and the Holy Spirit they mean substances (*jawāhir*) and not attributes (*ṣifāt*). Equating a substance with an attribute is certainly a delusion and fraud. It is something that contradicts philosophers' and theologians' terminology in both religions. Secondly, the attributes of God are more than three, such as knowledge (*ʿilm*), power (*qudra*), life (*ḥayāt*), will (*irāda*), word (*kalām*) and many others. Hence, there is no reason to limit divine attributes to three.[60]

There are some other Christian analogies, for the existence of three hypostases (*aqānīm*) in God, that are mentioned in al-Ṭūfī's *Commentary*. One of them is the example of a heated piece of iron with its iron, fire and sparks of fire. Another analogy is the example of the sun, i.e. its body/matter (*al-jirm*), overflowing light and rays,[61] which was extensively used in Christian apologetics from the earliest Muslim-Christian encounters onward. For instance, it is one of the most favoured metaphors of the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I (d. 208/823), and he uses it extensively when trying to make the doctrine of Trinity comprehensible to his Muslim interlocutor, the third Abbasid Caliph al-Mahdī (d. 169/785).[62]

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[58] '*Tasāwī al-maqīs wa-al-maqīs ʿalayh*' (ibid.).
[59] *Al-taʿlīq*, f. 214a.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., f. 216b.
[62] R. Caspar, 'Les versions arabes du dialogue entre le catholicos Timothée I et le calife al-Mahdî (II/VIII siècle) "Mohammed a suivi la voie des prophètes"', *Islamochristiana* 3, 1977, pp. 126-9.

Further on, al-Ṭūfī finds the Christian understanding of redemption to be an unsound and unwise opinion, since,

> There is no need for the omnipotent (*qādir*) and free willing (*mukhtār*) God to become flesh (*yatajassad*), bestow Himself generously and submit Himself to the cross in order to liberate sons of Adam from the fire. This is a quality of incompetents and not the one of the Omnipotent.[63]

3. *Divinity of Jesus*

Regarding some Christological issues, al-Ṭūfī emphasizes that it was first of all Jesus' miraculous birth and the miracles performed by him that were understood by Christians as deriving from his divine nature. Thus, their argument is derived from an extrapolation (*qiyās al-ghā'ib ʿalā al-shāhid*) and an incomplete induction (*al-istiqrā' ghayr al-tāmm*). With regard to the miraculous birth their reasoning is erroneous, because God's effect in creating Christ is that of an effective causality (*ʿilliyya*), an eternal power, but not an immediate causality (*sababiyya*) like the one fathers have in relation to their children. Al-Ṭūfī then proceeds with an argument comparing Jesus to Adam, a very common argument among polemicists which is based on the qur'anic verse: 'In God's eyes Jesus is just like Adam: he created him from dust, said to him, "Be", and he was.'[64]

However, al-Ṭūfī takes a step further, comparing Jesus' creation to that of Eve, an equation which can be also seen in al-Qurṭubī's (d. 671/1273) anti-Christian polemic, *Al-iʿlām*,[65] and Ibn Taymiyya's (d. 728/1328) *Al-jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*.[66] In the *tafsīr* literature, such as al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1286)[67] and later in Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373),[68]

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[63] *Al-taʿlīq*, f. 216b.

[64] Q 3.59.

[65] Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-iʿlām bi-mā fī dīn al-Naṣārā min al-fasād wa-al-awhām wa-izhār maḥāsin dīn al-islām wa-ithbāt nubūwat nabī Muḥammad*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā, Cairo, 1980, p. 137.

[66] Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-masīḥ*, ed. ʿAlī Ḥasan Nāṣir *et al.*, Riyadh, 1994, vol. IV, pp. 54-5. Cf. also Ibn Taymiyya, *Daqā'iq al-tafsīr*, ed. Muḥammad Sayyid al-Jaliand, Damascus, 1984, vol. I, p. 320.

[67] Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta'wīl*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣubḥī b. Ḥasan Ḥallāq and Maḥmūd Aḥmad al-Aṭrash, Damascus, 1421/2000, vol. I, p. 428.

[68] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿazīm*, n.p. (Cairo?), n.d. (1980?), vol. III, pp. 115 and 246. Cf. also his *Al-bidāya wa-al-nihāya*, Beirut, 1981, vol. II, p. 64; vol. III, p. 89; vol. VI, p. 291; and *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Waḥīd, Cairo, 1968, vol. II, p. 387.

this comparison is elaborated into an enumeration of four forms of human creation, Adam (i.e. created from no man and woman), Eve (i.e. created from man only), Jesus (i.e. created with no male factor), and the rest of humankind. Eve was derived from (*ushtuqqat min*) Adam's body, says al-Ṭūfī, while Christ was brought into being from Mary. She conceived Jesus through the agency of the Holy Spirit, who had breathed into her. It was through an everlasting power that she became pregnant and not through an ordinary human way. At this point it is interesting to see al-Ṭūfī underlining the Muslim view regarding the nature of the Holy Spirit. He highlights that the Holy Spirit is not a divine attribute or one of the three notions of God's essence as misunderstood by Christians, but rather is Gabriel, an angel. Consequently, if Jesus is going to be proclaimed God as a result of his miraculous birth, then Adam and Eve would deserve this title even more than Jesus, as they are his first parents. Most especially Adam, who was created with no human agency, should have a right to be regarded as divine, since he was brought into being with no father or mother and even without the agency of the Holy Spirit.[69]

The miracles performed by Jesus, which al-Ṭūfī presents as a second Christian argument for his divinity, he also does not find to be a proof in any way. Otherwise, he says, 'all the prophets should have been gods or should have deserved to share the divinity to the same extent as the miracles they have performed'. Comparing Jesus' miracles to the miracles performed by the other prophets such as Moses, al-Ṭūfī concludes that Moses' miracles were greater than those performed by Jesus. Thus, according to this way of reasoning, Moses should be more deserving of being considered divine than Jesus. For example, turning a stick into a snake brings an inanimate object to life, whereas raising a human from the dead merely gives life back to a being that was by nature once alive.[70] Moreover, Jesus himself was one of God's signs/miracles (*āya min āyāt Allāh*), a servant and a prophet of God among many. He was sent to the people in order to make them obey and worship God, the Lord. Jesus saved them from error (*al-ḍalāla*) and led them to happiness (*al-saʿāda*) just as the other prophets had done. For al-Ṭūfī, this is

[69] *Al-taʿlīq*, f. 214b.
[70] Ibid., f. 215a.

the true meaning of the verse in the Gospel of Matthew: 'He will save his people from their sins.'[71]

4. *Scriptural reasoning*

Christ's words 'the Father', 'the Son', 'my Father', 'my Father and your Father', mentioned in the Gospels, constitute the third topic discussed by al-Ṭūfī relating to the divine status of Jesus as alleged by the Christians. He articulates two main answers pertaining to these titles. One way of replying is to refute them all and not regard them as words of Christ. Accordingly, al-Ṭūfī cites two stories about how the Christians were misled. According to the first story the Christians, 'because of their ignorance', were deceived by the Jews. Although he does not mention him by name, it is obvious from the story that it is Paul who is meant here—a common feature of many Muslim polemical writings. In this account, Paul is presented as a cunning person who out of his great enmity towards Christians deceives them with his skilful activities. He uses his conversion to Christianity, which was not genuine, as a mere wile in order to mislead its sincere adherents. In this anti-Pauline account, he is seen as responsible not only for the controversy among the Christians but also for creating a discrepancy between the Gospels. However, al-Ṭūfī does not give any precise source for this story, apart from the scanty information that it was written 'by one of our scholars in his book of *Sects* (*firaq*)'.[72] The second account is quoted from Wahb b. al-Munabbih, according to which it is Iblīs (Satan) and his two assistants who led the Christians astray. Thus, all the Trinitarian and Christological controversies originated from this satanic fraud.[73]

The second way of dealing with these Christological titles is to interpret them metaphorically. Al-Ṭūfī finds this approach of metaphorical interpretation to be preferable to the approach of total denial. Accordingly, the meaning of 'Father' and 'Son' would be 'Lord' and 'Servant'. A father shows his child mercy just as a lord does to his servant. Also, the praise given by a servant to his master and the respect given by a child to his father are what constitutes the metaphorical similarity between these names. Since Christ did not

[71] Matt 1.21. Cf. *Al-ta'līq*, f. 217a.
[72] Ibid., f. 215a.
[73] Ibid., f. 215b.

have a father, God undertook his care and upbringing as a father would do to his child; hence, the metaphorical relationship.[74]

Al-Ṭūfī belonged to the Ḥanbalite school of law and theology, well known for its literalist readings of the Qur'an which censured the use of allegorical interpretation (*ta'wīl*) when reading the verses pertaining to the divine attributes. Despite this, it is remarkable to see how al-Ṭūfī himself employs allegorical interpretative skills when dealing, for instance, with Jesus' title of 'Son of God' and many other biblical verses. He also criticizes Christians for not taking these titles in a metaphorical way. However, he says, Christians are very keen on employing far-fetched metaphorical interpretations of those verses from Torah and Gospel that contradict their perceptions. Hence, al-Ṭūfī finds Christians to be inconsistent and accuses them of using forced efforts in their scriptural readings.[75]

Another example of al-Ṭūfī's metaphorical reading of the Gospels relates to Christ's words during the Last Supper.[76] 'The bread being Jesus' body and wine being his blood is not intended to be taken literally', he says but should be taken metaphorically, as if Jesus was saying 'bread and wine constitute the substance or matter (*mādda*) of my body and blood'. This is because body and blood are engendered from or dependent on (*yatawalladu ʿan*) what is eaten and drunk. Jesus' purpose was to show the disciples that he is a pure human being with no share in divinity, since God is not dependent on food or anything created (*al-muḥdathāt*). At this point we also see al-Ṭūfī citing a verse from the Qur'an as a proof text for his biblical reading. For him, the qur'anic words, 'The Messiah, son of Mary, was only a messenger; other messengers had come and gone before him; his mother was a virtuous woman; both ate food',[77] are nothing but a confirmation of Jesus' statement in the Last Supper.[78]

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[74] Ibid.
[75] Cf. ibid., f. 217a and also f. 222b.
[76] Matt 26.26-8.
[77] Q 5.25.
[78] Cf. *Al-taʿlīq*, f. 227b.

5. *Jesus' nature*

A further unusual point raised by al-Ṭūfī concerns Jesus' nature. He states that Christ, according to some, was an angel who appeared in human form. This view is based on two arguments, he says, a hadith according to which Gabriel appeared in the form of Diḥya[79] and the qurʾanic verse, 'Indeed, if We had sent an angel as messenger, We would still have sent him in the form of a man'.[80] This same understanding of Jesus' nature is mentioned in his other work, *Al-intiṣārāt al-islāmiyya*, but this time with no details and no explanation given.[81] However, in his *ʿAlam al-jadhal fī ʿilm al-jadal*, a treatise on the art of disputation, al-Ṭūfī says explicitly that he himself thinks that Jesus might have been an angel who appeared in the form of a man. Highlighting especially the last part of the aforementioned verse, 'so increasing their confusion', he thinks it was because of this that Christians went astray and took Jesus to be a god.[82]

Conclusion

Although written in a polemical spirit, al-Ṭūfī's *Taʿlīq* is an unusual example of a distinct genre, being a commentary composed by a medieval Muslim theologian on the four Gospels and some of the other biblical books. However, the author preferred to call his commentary a *taʿlīq* rather than a *tafsīr*, a term related specifically to Qurʾan commentaries. Thus, even from the title the reader gets a hint about al-Ṭūfī's critical approach to the Bible and the polemical scrutiny he employs in dealing with the Christian scriptures. Nevertheless, in his readings of the Bible al-Ṭūfī's approach tends to be very open to metaphorical interpretation. Despite the fact that he holds the Gospels, for example, not to be identical with the *Injīl* of the Qurʾan, his initial step in reading the text is to interpret it in such a way that it is compatible with Islamic principles. It is only

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[79] Al-Nasāʾī, *Sunan*, al-īmān wa-sharāʿiuh 6. For similar accounts cf. also al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-manāqib 26, faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān 1; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-īmān 76, faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥāba 16; al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, al-manāqib 12.

[80] Q 6.9. Cf. *Al-taʿlīq*, f. 240b.

[81] *Al-intiṣārāt al-islāmiyya*, vol. I., p. 284.

[82] Cf. *ʿAlam al-jadhal*, p. 154.

in those cases where he cannot contribute much to the metaphorical way of understanding that he attributes passages to Christian alterations and forgeries. In other words, although al-Ṭūfī puts the ways of transmission of the Bible under polemical scrutiny, when it comes to the biblical text itself his primary focus is to interpret it in harmony with Islamic teachings. Only where this method may not seem to be applicable does he rely on the principle of falsification and tampering (*taḥrīf*). In addition, not only does al-Ṭūfī interpret the biblical text itself by using Islamic texts such as the Qurʾan, hadith, and other sources, as we have seen above in his comments regarding the Last Supper, but he also does the reverse—namely, taking the Bible to predict the coming of Muḥammad and the rise of Islam.

Although al-Ṭūfī's work contains traces of the polemical tradition from earlier times, it also brings some new and original views and approaches. For example, his understanding of Jesus' nature in equating him with an angel is an extraordinary point that needs to be explored more carefully. Moreover, besides the well known comparison between Jesus and Adam made by all previous polemicists, he also compares Jesus' creation to that of Eve, a new dimension that appears in his writings and the writings of his contemporaries.

Based on the (admittedly limited) analysis provided here, it would appear that, in the history of Muslim writings on Christianity, it was actually al-Ṭūfī who for the first time penned a *critical commentary* (*taʿlīq*) on the Bible, thus creating a new literary genre and innovatively employed this term for the title of his work.

Further studies are necessary in order to examine issues and perspectives not covered here. Firstly, it would be worth examining what Muslim and Christian sources al-Ṭūfī made use of and which translation of the Bible he quoted from in his *Critical Commentary* and other writings. Who his addressees were is another question yet to be solved—in other words, which Christian denomination did he have in mind when talking about Christianity? Last but not least a comparison between al-Ṭūfī and other Ḥanbalite anti-Christian polemics such as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā fī ajwibat al-Yahūd wa-al-Naṣārā* and Ibn Taymiyya's (d. 728/1328) *Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ*, *Kitāb al-ṣārim al-maslūl ʿalā shātim al-rasūl*, and *Al-risāla al-Qubruṣiyya* would help us understand where *Al-taʿlīq* stands in the wider picture of interfaith polemics.

ILLUSTRATING THE GOSPELS IN ARABIC: BYZANTINE AND ARAB CHRISTIAN MINIATURES IN TWO MANUSCRIPTS OF THE EARLY MAMLŪK PERIOD IN CAMBRIDGE

LUCY-ANNE HUNT

Introduction

This contribution considers two little-known Arabic Gospel books in Cambridge University Library, with a view to considering the transfer or 'translation' of Gospel illustration from Greek into Arabic. One of the manuscripts, Cambridge University Library MS Gg. 5.33, reuses Greek Gospel illustrations directly. The illustrations of the other, MS Add. 1860, were arguably painted by an Arab Christian artist, absorbing Greek and other eastern Christian traditions at the same time as making the Arabic tradition its own. Here, this Christian Arab tradition of Gospel illustration can be seen to develop in a way that is both related to and differentiated from Islamic decoration of the Qu'ran. It can be suggested that the process of transmission of illustration may run on parallel lines to that of the collation of texts, although not necessarily derived from the same manuscripts as the text in any one case. This was at a time, in early Mamlūk Egypt, when there were different versions available. One of the functions of the use of Greek, or Greek-style, illustrations was, I propose, to offer a seal of respectability to the text.

Both manuscripts are included in E.G. Browne's *Hand-List of the Muḥammadan Manuscripts...preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, published in 1900, but the fact that they are both illustrated has escaped notice by art historians.[1] Since the manuscripts are

[1] E.G. Browne, *A Hand-List of the Muḥammadan Manuscripts (including all those written in the Arabic character) preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, Cambridge, 1900, pp. 11-12 no. 68 (MS Gg. 5.33) and 12 no. 69 (MS Add. 1860). Neither is included in, for example, H. Buchthal and O. Kurz, *A Hand List of Illuminated Oriental Christian Manuscripts*, London, 1942 (repr. Nendeln, Lichtenstein, 1968). I am very grateful to Mrs Jill Butterworth, formerly of the Division of Oriental and Other Languages,

so little known, it is necessary to start with their background, history and description before considering the issues raised by their illustrations.

Both manuscripts have long been known to textual scholars. They were assigned to a 'miscellaneous' group ('HSS mit Evv-Texten unbekannter Herkunft') by Georg Graf in 1944, whose work built on that of Ignazio Guido in his 1888 classification of Arabic Gospels, since they did not easily fit into those with a definable origin in Greek, Syriac Peshiṭṭā, Coptic or other versions translated or collated in Egypt in the thirteenth century.[2] These versions include those of al-ʿAsad Ibn al-ʿAssāl and the 'Alexandrian Vulgate'.[3] It has been pointed out, however, that much work needs to be done on the texts of the Arabic versions.[4] This includes the relationship between versions, including that between that of al-ʿAssāl and the Alexandrine Vulgate. So, for example, Samir Arbache has suggested that the al-ʿAssāl version was essentially the basis for the 'Alexandrian Vulgate', which having removed the notes in this version, 'présenta un texte homogène intégrant les variantes pour constituer une recension éclectique qu'il est convenu d'appeler la "Vulgate alexandrine"'.[5] On the other hand, J. Valentin has emphasized the importance of the existence of the Coptic version existing prior to al-ʿAssāl's version, exemplified in the manuscript in the Vatican Library, MS Vat. Copto 9.[6] The present study contributes to

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Cambridge University Library, for drawing my attention to MS Gg. 5.33 and for facilitating my work in the Library. This work is part of a study in progress by the author of illustrated Christian Arabic manuscripts.

[2] I. Guido, 'Le traduzioni degli Evangelii in arabo e in etiopico' *Atti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei, Memorie*, anno CCLXXV, serie quarta, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, IV, Partie 1 (a), Rome, 1888, pp. 5-76; G. Graf, *Geschichte der Christlichen Arabischen Literatur*, vol. I *Die Übersetzungen*, Vatican City, 1944, p. 169. See also B.M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament*, Oxford, 1977, pp. 260-1 and 264-5, for the Hibat Allāh Ibn al-ʿAssal and 'AlexandrianVulgate' versions.

[3] For the version of al-Asʿad Abū al-Farag Hibat Allāh, see S.K. Samir, 'La version arabe des évangiles d'al-Asʿad ibn al-ʿAssāl', *Parole de l'Orient* 19, 1994, pp. 441-51. For his life, see W. Abullif, 'Vita e opera del pensatore copto al-Ṣafi ibn al-ʿAssāl (sec. XIII)', *Collectanea* 20, 1987, pp. 135-7. For manuscripts of the 'Alexandrian Vulgate', see Graf, *GCAL*, vol. I, pp. 160-2.

[4] See the comments of S. Arbache, 'Les versions arabes des évangiles' *Mélanges de Sciences Religieuses* 56, 1999, pp. 89-90.

[5] Arbache, 'Les versions arabes des évangiles', p. 93.

[6] J. Valentin, 'Les évangélaires arabes de la bibliothèque du monastère Ste-Cathe-

this wider debate by examining the artistic evidence from the two manuscripts in Cambridge, to see how miniatures were 'collated' alongside the written texts.

Cambridge University Library MS Gg. 5.33

The first of the two Gospel books in Cambridge (Gg. 5.33), in the Erpenius collection, was formerly in the Coptic Patriarchal Library in Cairo, and acquired in Egypt by Michael Mambre, interpreter to the Venetian delegation, in the 1560s (see Appendix 1).[7] It is usually coupled with another, this time unillustrated, Arabic Gospel book now in Cambridge (MS Gg. 5.27) which was also formerly in the patriarchal collection and acquired by Michael Mambre. According to a Latin note at the front of the manuscript, this unillustrated one, dated 2nd May 1285, was given to David de Wilem by Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, in 1618.[8] In the early seventeenth century, both manuscripts were acquired by Erpenius, the Dutch Orientalist (Thomas van Erpe). Having studied in Leiden with Joseph Scaliger, and travelled around Europe, Erpenius returned to Leiden in 1612 and published his printed version of the Arabic New Testament there in 1616.[9] He collated both Gospel MSS Gg. 5.33 and Gg. 5.27 alongside the principal manuscript which formed the backbone of the project, an Arabic Gospel book of the 'Alexandrian Vulgate' version given to Leiden University Library by Scaliger (MS or. 2369), made for the monastery of St John in the Thebaid in 1059 AM/1342-3 AD.[10] Erpenius acquired some of his Arabic manuscripts from the estate of Étienne Hubert, formerly professor at the Collège Royale in Paris and one of Erpenius' former teachers, and others

rine (Mont Sinai): essai de classification d'après l'étude d'un chapitre (*Matth.* 28). Traducteurs, reviseurs, types textuels' *Le Muséon* 116, 2003, p. 470.

[7] According to Browne, *Hand-List*, p. 12, the manuscript was in Michael Mamre's possession in December 1560 or 1565.

[8] Browne, *Hand-List*, p. 11 no. 67.

[9] *Al-'ahd al-jadid. Novum D. N. Iesu Christi Testamentum Arabice ex Bibliotheca Leidensi. Edente Thoma Erpenio*, Leiden, 1616. For a summary of Erpenius' career, see G.J. Toomer, *Eastern Wisedome and Learning: the Study of Arabic in Seventeenth-Century England*, Oxford, 1996, pp. 43-7.

[10] B.M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament*, Oxford 1977, p. 265.

from Constantinople, through the offices of the Dutch ambassador, Cornelius Haga.[11] When he died, the fifty-six Arabic manuscripts, together with the rest of Erpenius' manuscript collection, were sold in Leiden to George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, who became Chancellor of the University of Cambridge in 1626. After his assassination in 1628, his widow was lobbied to bequeath Erpenius' books to Cambridge University Library, which she did in 1632.[12] One of the arguments used to influence the bequest was that the manuscripts would provide the basis for a teaching collection. The prime mover behind this initiative was the then University Librarian, Abraham Whelock, who was subsequently appointed the first professor of Arabic at Cambridge. The acquisition of Christian, in addition to Muslim, manuscripts chimes with the wider intellectual interest in seventeenth-century England in Christians in Arabic-speaking areas.[13]

MS Gg. 5.33 is dated in its additional colophon to 988 AM/1272 AD. This also gives the information that the manuscript was copied from another written by John, Bishop of Kift.[14] John's manuscript had itself been copied from a manuscript collated by Shaykh Nash al-Imām Ibn 'Izzu al-Kuftāt. A paper manuscript, it is neatly written in *naskhī* script by a single scribe, and Byzantine illuminated portraits on vellum have been added. Those of Mark, Luke and John are present, although that of Matthew is missing. All three portraits, showing the evangelist seated and copying his Gospel against a gold background, are in a typical Byzantine style of the late eleventh to early twelfth century. They are from the same original Greek manu-

[11] Toomer, *Eastern Wisedome*.

[12] For the acquisition of Erpenius' manuscripts by Cambridge University Library, see J.C.T. Oates, *The Manuscripts of Thomas Erpenius*, Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand, Melbourne, 1974, pp. 222-31, quoted by Toomer, *Eastern Wisedome*, pp. 91-2. J.C.T. Oates, *Cambridge University Library: A Historical Sketch*, Cambridge University Library, 1975, p. 9, puts the total number of manuscripts at 87, including manuscripts in Persian and Malay and a printed book in Chinese, and points out that the development of the library in the seventeenth century was motivated by the desire to rival Sir Thomas Bodley's at Oxford. The same information is included in http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/History/3.htm.

[13] See A. Hamilton, 'The English Interest in the Arabic-Speaking Christians' in G.A. Russell, ed., *The 'Arabick' Interest of the Natural Philosophers in Seventeenth-Century England*, Leiden, 1994, pp. 30-53.

[14] For John, Bishop of Kift, see Samir, 'Version arabe', pp. 498-502.

script. At this time, Greek manuscripts would have been present in libraries in Egypt, for the use of the Melkite community, affiliated to the Byzantine church, and were available for the purpose of texual collation. A good example is the use of Greek Gospel books in the first half the eleventh century in the production of a translation of the Gospels into Arabic by the Melkite bishop of Cairo, Theophilus Ibn Tawfīl, a Damascene. Two manuscripts of this translation, one of 1046/7 and the other of 1195, were used, together with a version based on the Syriac, by Ibn al-ʿAssāl in the preparation of his work in the mid-thirteenth century.[15]

Portrait of St Mark (f. 52v) (Fig. 1)

St Mark (f. 52v) is identified in his portrait by the Greek inscription in red ὁ ἅγιος μάρκος. The miniature shows the evangelist seated on a stool, facing right, reflecting on the manuscript on the lectern in front of him, its original writing scratched out, and later marks added. His right hand, in which he holds his pen, is momentarily at rest. He holds his left hand to his face in a gesture of contemplation and concentration. The portrait is framed in a red border (23 x 15.7 cm), with a leaf protruding from the top right side. It is evident that the page has been shaved to fit its new context in the Arabic manuscript as the outer edge of the folio is not aligned with this red border.

He is shown, as Mark normally is in Byzantine evangelist portraits, as dark and bearded. He has black hair and brown eyes, with back dots in the centre. The areas around the eyes are shaded in brown. The area around the eyes is also shaded in brown, as is that around the hair line and the beard. The cheeks are pink. The arms and feet are painted brown, as is the lectern and stool. Where there is paint loss on the left arm, remains of underpainting on the hand, fingers and arm itself are visible. His undergarment is a steel-grey/blue with black parallel lines, while the upper garment is pale grey/green and the garments are highlighted in white. Black is used to delineate the drapery around the neck, lower leg and knee. His halo is red.

The quality of the gold is high. In places red can be seen showing

[15] Graf, *GCAL*, vol. II, p.147; Arbache, 'Les versions', pp. 92, 93 n.

through. This is reminiscent of the strengthening effect of the gold ground in icon painting when Armenian boll is layered on below the gold leaf, producing a rich, nuanced, effect. Traces of the gold ground show through the fabric up the evangelist's back as well as his feet, indicating that no expense was spared in laying down the gold ground generously at an early stage. Gold is also used to decorate the left end of the dark blue and orange cushion on which Mark is seated. Silver is used in places on the lectern, although it has now oxidized, as well as in a zigzag design around the base of the footstool.

This portrait, with that of Matthew now missing and those of Luke and John, was surely taken from a late eleventh to early twelfth-century Greek manuscript, either a lectionary or a Gospel book. The art historical parallels for the miniatures point to this time-span. The portrait of Mark is comparable with his portrait in a lectionary on Mount Athos (Monastery of St Panteleimon, Cod. 2), attributed to the end of the eleventh to early twelfth century, especially in the pose of the figure and the way the drapery is moulded around the body.[16] Several features are also comparable with the same evangelist portrait in a Gospel book in Venice (Biblioteca Marciana Cod. Gr. 1, 53 [=966]), which has been dated to the second half of the eleventh century.[17] These features include the way the evangelist holds his hand to his face with one hand while the other hand holds the pen at rest, and the way his leg is drawn back. St Mark can also be compared with his counterpart added to a Greek Gospel book in the Mingana Collection in Birmingham (Algerina Peckover 561, Fig. 4), attributed to early twelfth-century Constantinople.[18] The

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[16] F. 115v: S. Pelekanides *et al.*, *The Treasures of Mount Athos: Illuminated Manuscripts*, 2 vols, Athens, 1973, 1975, vol. II, p. 296 with colour plate 274, p. 152; P. Huber, *Athos: Leben, Glaube Kunst,* rpr. Zurich and Freiburg im Breisgau, 1982, Abb. 91.

[17] I. Furlan, *Codici greci illustrata della Biblioteca Marciana*, 4 vols, Milan, 1978-80, vol. II, pp. 10-12; M. Zorzi *et al.*, *Venetiae quasi alterum Byzantium: Collezioni Veneziane di Codici Greci della Raccolte della Biblioteca Nationale Marciana* (Catalogue of an exhibition, Venezia Libreria Sansoviniana, 16 September - 15 October 1993), Venice, 1993, no. 2 pp. 18-19 with colour plates pp. 20 (Luke) and 21 (Mark).

[18] F. 113v: L.-A. Hunt, *The Mingana and Related Collections: A Survey of Illustrated Arabic, Greek, Eastern Christian, Persian and Turkish Manuscripts in the Selly Oak Colleges*, Birmingham, 1997, pp. 49-50, no. 84, with colour pl. 3 and cover. The manuscript collection is now housed in the Orchard Learning Centre, Selly Oak Campus, University of Birmingham.

pose is the same, with the evangelist seated on a stool against a gold ground, one foot pulled back, copying from a lectern in front of him. The same pale palette is used, and there is the same gold ground. Again, comparison can be drawn with the same portrait in the lectionary in New York, Pierpont Morgan Library M692.[19] Here, although Mark is writing, there are several elements which overlap with the portrait in the Cambridge manuscript, including the pose of the evangelist and also elements of the furniture, including the stool, the bookcase and the book rest. Gary Vikan has compared the portraits in the New York lectionary to other manuscripts, including those of Mount Athos Panteleimon Cod. 2 already mentioned, and a Gospel book in Paris, Bibl. Nat. cod. gr. 189, attributing it to a workshop operating in Constantinople during the first half of the twelfth century.[20]

St Luke (f. 84v) (Fig. 2)

The portrait of St Luke shows the seated evangelist, ὁ ἅγιος λουκας, copying the Gospel, grasping the book with his left hand and writing with his right. The format is similar to that of Mark's portrait, with a similar stool, footstool and bookcase on which writing implements are placed, with the lectern attached above. On the lectern a codex is placed with its text rubbed off from the left side, and later marks added. The same has occurred with the book being written by the evangelist, perhaps indicating an attempt at some stage to hide the Greek origin of the book. It is also framed with a simple red line, with the protruding leaves here preserved at both the lower and upper outer edges. In addition, there are fragmentary remains in the upper border of a step pattern finely drawn over the gold.

The evangelist's face has the same brown shading as Mark, under the eyes, around the cheek and throat, and the back of the neck. The rest of the face and the forehead are coloured pink, with brown eyebrows and curled, thinning, hair. The right eye has been scraped, and there is other loss of pigment to the hairline, chin, neck, the seat and the right side of the book cupboard. Care has been taken

[19] F. 123v: G. Vikan, *Illuminated Greek Manuscripts in American Collections: An Exhibition in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann* (The Art Museum, Princeton University, April 14-May 20, 1973), Princeton, 1973, p. 135 with Fig. 60.

[20] Vikan, *Illuminated Greek Manuscripts*, p. 135.

with the evangelist's hands: the knuckles of his right hand and the finger and thumb of his left hand are highlighted. His brown feet, with black sandals, rest on the plain foot-rest.

The lower garment is coloured pale grey-green, with black stripes on the arm and white shading. The overgarment is painted in a dull pink, a stronger tone of which is used to outline the body and, with white, to shade it. Black is not strongly in evidence, being used only at the neck, waist and hem. White is used for highlighting. Finally, the lectern is brown with oxidized silver panels and the cushion is dark blue with black folds completed with a pair of fine white lines at the tip.

The portrait of Luke is also comparable with his counterpart in the Mount Athos manuscript (Monastery of St Panteleimon, Cod. 2), with the evangelist dressed in similarly palid-coloured garments, seated on a stool against a gold ground, with his feet resting on the square footstool.[21] The same simple red titling is employed. Another example of a similarly-posed portrait of St Luke is that in an eleventh-century Gospel book in the Library of the Monastery of St John, Patmos (Patmos 79), even if here and in the Mount Athos portrait it is a scroll rather than a codex that is being copied.[22]

St John (f. 139v) (Fig. 3)

This miniature has suffered considerable damage, with the figure completely painted over, leaving only the remains of brown skin on the lower arm. St John is identified by the abbreviation ἁ ιω, to which other letters have been added later. The evangelist is seated in a high-backed chair, and he leans forward as he reads the book on the lectern in front of him, his head encircled with a red halo. The portrait is framed in a red double frame with leaved protrusions at the outer edges and the stepped pattern within the margin. The gold background of this portrait is very rubbed, especially at the top. The lectern is again brown, with panelling and with the writing implements below the book stand.

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[21] F. 83v: Pelekanides *et al.*, *Treasures of Mount Athos*, vol. II, p. 296 with colour plate 275, p. 152; Huber, *Athos*, p. 186, Abb. 90.

[22] F. 105v: N. Patterson Ševčenko, 'Illuminating the Liturgy: Illustrated Service Books in Byzantium', in L. Safran, ed., *Heaven on Earth: Art and the Church in Byzantium*, University Park, 1998, p. 187 with colour Plate X.

The pose of the evangelist, his back rounded as he sits in the high-backed chair, is a feature of middle Byzantine evangelist portraits of St John, as in the miniature in the eleventh-century Gospel book in Athens (National Library 57).[23] He also appears similarly in the Algerina Peckover Greek Gospels in Birmingham, even if here the chair is of rounded construction, made of woven wicker, in common with that of the portrait in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.[24]

Summary

It is true that the manuscript has been rebound, and so in theory the Byzantine portraits could have been added at a later stage, especially since no Arabic text is written on the reverse of the miniatures. However, there are some indications that the miniatures may have been bound in from the beginning. The manuscript is organized in quinions which include these added vellum pages. Also f.4 is a blank vellum page, where a portrait is missing, suggesting that the portrait may have been missing from the original Greek manuscript when its miniatures were appropriated for the new Arabic book. If the miniatures were added later, when the rebinding was done, for example, why was no replacement miniature made, or found, for this page? It is perfectly likely, then, that the precious Byzantine antique vellum pages with evangelist portraits were added to the Arabic Gospel book when it was written, in 1272 AD. They came from a Constantinopolitan Greek codex of c. 1100, but it cannot, of course, be said whether or not this manuscript had any connection with Bishop John of Kift, whose Gospels provided the model for the Arabic text. Nor can it be said when the manuscript arrived in the Coptic Patriarchate collection, whence it was acquired by Michael Mambre in the sixteenth century. It could well have been written in Cairo, or Old Cairo, and the paleography would not contradict this. What is certain is that it was made in Egypt, and provides an example of a treasured Byzantine book in Coptic possession in the

[23] F. 265v: Ševčenko, 'Illuminating the Liturgy,' p. 188, Fig. 7.4.

[24] F. 282v: Hunt, *Mingana*, p. 50 with plate 21 (the evangelist here differs in being shown left handed); for the Pierpont Morgan Library MS 692 portrait, see Vikan, *Illuminated Greek Manuscripts*, p. 135.

early Mamlūk period. A later reader even asserted his orthodoxy in a note written later, after St John's Gospel.[25] The inclusion of the miniatures could well have been used to enhance the respectability and venerableness of the Arabic text.

Cambridge University Library Add. MS 1860

The other Cambridge manuscript to be considered, Add. MS 1860, also has a well-known Cairene provenance (see Appendix 2). According to inscriptions added to the front of the manuscript, it was acquired by a French lawyer, Monsieur Grongnard, from the Jesuit C. Sicard in Cairo in 1725. Grognard gave it in turn to C. Brinsden in 1734. Brinsden showed it to Bernard de Montfaucon at St German des Près in 1736, who gave his opinions that it was dateable to the twelfth or thirteenth century.[26] He also sought the opinion, in 1766 and again in 1774, of Dr Thomas Hunt, the then Laudian professor of Arabic at Oxford, who expressed the view that the manuscript was 500 then years old, i.e. dateable to the thirteenth century.[27] E.G. Browne also assumed that the manuscript was dateable to the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, as did Georg Graf.[28] The miniatures fit into the latter end of this time-frame.

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[25] F. 181r: ʿĪsā Ibn Maksūd Ibn al-Malaki al-Urthūduksī. The note is dated 1544 AM. I am grateful to Mr Fadly Glada Shenouda for assistance with this inscription and other Arabic texts.

[26] The Benedictine scholar Bernard de Montfaucon (1655-1741) had studied oriental languages in Paris, although he is better known for his work on the Church Fathers, the *Palaeographia Graeca* of 1708, and his work on classical and French antiquities. See the entry by G. Fatouras in F.W.Bautz, *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexicon*, vol. VI, Hamm, 1993, cols 92-4, http://www.bautz.de/bbkl/m/montfauconshtml.

[27] Thomas Hunt was interested in the Arabic language as well as in Arabic medicine, science and mathematics: see P.M. Holt, "Background to Arabic Studies in Seventeenth-Century England" in Russell (ed.), *The 'Arabick' Interest*, p. 27. He undertook, for Richard Mead, a collation of Latin translations of Rhasis' treatise on smallpox, comparing them with the original Arabic: see A. Wear, 'English Medical Writers and their Interest in Classical Arabic Medicine in the Seventeenth Century', in Russell, *The 'Arabick' Interest*, p. 276.

[28] Browne, *Hand-List*, p. 12: 'the MS, described (presumably correctly) as of the 12th or 13th century'; Graf *GCAL*, vol. I, p. 169.

Portrait of St Mark (f. 93v) (Fig. 5)[29]

St Mark is seated, facing left, the direction of the Arabic text. The saint is named in Greek, Ο ΆΓΙΟC: MAPKOC, in red at the top in a deliberate, non-Greek hand. The same is true of the text on the lectern and the one being written on the saint's knee. There are remnants of the saint's halo, also in red, with filling in black dots, against the gold ground. The gold ground is visible through the base of the hem of the garment worn by the evangelist and around the top of his right arm. Overall, the miniature is brightly coloured, rendering it strikingly more vivid than the Byzantine miniatures of MS Gg. 5.33. The saint has black hair and beard with some white streaks. The face, sketched out in red, has black eyebrows, bulbous nose, and a line of red between the eye and eyebrow, with grey for the wrinkling of the brow above and around the temples. There are red streaks on the forehead, and the modelling of the left cheek is also in red. Mark's overgarment is in orange with pink shading, while the undergarment is blue with white shading. The evangelist is seated on a rectangular wooden stool, which is orange with large crosses in dark red, with smaller orange crosses at their centres and others in grey in the segments between them. The seat is draped in a cloth banded in blue and red. He sits on a pink cushion, with dark red creases. His round foot-rest is purple with dark red sides. The green below his feet is marked with darker green and black parallel lines. The lectern, sand-coloured and drawn around in red, has the codex supported on a fish-shaped rest. The writing implements are in blue, as is the stem of the ink bottle in the cupboard below. The cupboard is dark red inside, as are the small arches at the bottom of this piece of furniture. Behind is a blue domed building with blue shadowing at the windows. The miniature is framed with a blue line (19.9 x 13.5 cm), with orange at the bottom. The miniature has the number 221 written in a European hand in the lower left margin. If this indicates an earlier page positioning of the miniature, then there has been some reordering of the manuscript when it was most recently rebound.

[29] The portrait of St Mark was omitted from the description of the manuscript by Browne, *Hand-List*.

St Luke (f. 156v) (Fig. 7)

St Luke's portrait follows the same format as that of Mark, with the evangelist seated facing the viewer's left, writing on a lined folio which is on his right knee. His name is written in the same deliberately-copied Greek in the same hand, Ο ΆΓΙΟC: ΛΟΥΚΑC, in bright orange. Orange is also used for the text on the lectern, this time against a black ground. Luke's face, which has suffered damage, is outlined in red, with pink around the forehead and grey around the side of the face. Also in common with Mark, his facial features include a long nose, rounded cheeks and the line preserved above his right eye which forms a V with the eyebrow. The halo is again dotted in black and ringed around in red. His hands are outlined in red. His overgarment is grey-green, outlined in blue and black, while the undergarment is pale orange. The writing desk, painted pink on its left side and sand-coloured on its right, is shown in perspective, like St Mark's. Again, the lectern support is in the shape of a fish. The bottle with black ink is coloured blue. Luke's throne is pink with crosses in paler pink outlined in dark red, with a bright orange cushion. The cloth draped over it is hemmed with pairs of horizontal lines in blue and orange-red. The round footstool is bright orange. The domed building behind is blue, with the windows coloured an inky blue and the roof tiles arranged diagonally. A red-orange canopy attached by three rings completes the illustration at the top. The presence of the number 158 added in a European hand below the miniature shows that it was placed, as now, preceding the text of Luke's Gospel before rebinding.

St John (f. 249v) (Fig. 8)

The older figure of St John, his name written in blue, Ο ΑΓΙΟC ιῶ, strikes a similar pose to the other two evangelists, seated and writing. His face is comparably drawn, and he has the same dotted halo. His undergarment is grey-green shaded with blue, with rich blue for the overgarment. The writing desk, again sand-coloured with the fish-shaped stand, is this time purple on the left side. The sand-coloured ink bottle holds green ink. John's brown and black throne is a larger structure than that of the other evangelists, with a cross at the end of the side panel and a back-rest. His foot-rest is orange. Behind him, the building is topped with a pink dome,

its tiles arranged in a herring-bone design. An orange curtain is suspended on three loops above.

The Greek inscriptions and the style of the portraits show a link with Greek manuscripts. The similar pose of the evangelists, showing them writing on one knee, copying from a codex on a stand in front of them with a building behind, can be set within the context of the broad background of the Levantine Greek manuscripts of the late twelfth to early thirteenth century, known as the 'decorative style' group. An example is in the portrait of St Matthew in the New Testament Paris, Bibl. Nat. Coislin gr. 200, where the enthroned evangelist similarly stoops as he writes his Gospel on his knee, his other leg extended, his lectern before him with the tall vertical building behind.[30] In proposing the main location of the production of this 'decorative style' group of manuscripts, especially Gospel books, in Palestine and Cyprus, Annemarie Weyl Carr also drew attention to affiliations of members of the group to the oriental Christian churches, the Coptic, Syrian and Armenian.[31] She also alluded to the possibility that manuscripts of this group were produced in Syria.[32] Links with eastern Christian manuscript illumination are apparent, including Coptic and Armenian affiliations, especially in the group's later thirteenth century phase. It is known that one member of the group, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek gr. qu. 66, was brought to Egypt, as it was given as a gift there in 1219 AD and was referred to by the artists of the Copto-Arabic New Testament MS Paris, Institut Catholique Copte-Arabe 1/Cairo, Bibl. 94.[33] It is more than likely that similar manuscripts were brought to Egypt, and others produced there.

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[30] A. Weyl Carr, 'A Group of Provincial Manuscripts from the Twelfth Century', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 36, 1982, [pp. 39-81]; repr. in A. Weyl Carr, *Cyprus and the Devotional Arts of Byzantum in the Era of the Crusades*, Aldershot and Burlington VT, 2005, p. 40 with Fig. 1; A. Weyl Carr, *Byzantine Illumination, 1150-1250: The Study of a Provincial Tradition*, Chicago, 1987, pp. 274-5, catalogue no. 93 with reproduction Fiche 4C1.

[31] Carr, 'Group of Provincial Manuscripts', pp. 47, 52, 59-60, 65-6.

[32] Carr, 'Group of Provincial Manuscripts', p. 65.

[33] For Berlin gr. Qu. 6, see Carr, *Byzantine Illumination*, index, p. 315; L.-A. Hunt, 'Christian-Muslim Relations in Painting in Egypt of the Twelfth to mid-Thirteenth Centuries: Sources of Wallpainting at Deir es-Suriani and the Illustration of the New Testament MS Paris, Copte-Arabe 1/Cairo, Bibl 94', *Cahiers Archéologiques* 33, 1985, pp. 111-55; rpr. in L.-A. Hunt, *Byzantium, Eastern Christianity and Islam: Art at the Crossroads of the Medieval Mediterranean*, London, 1998, vol. I, [pp. 205-81] pp. 240 with n. 76, 269-70.

The Gospel book Cambridge MS Add. 1860 can be dated to the end of the thirteenth century on the basis of its evangelist portraits and its frontispiece pages. Two Coptic manuscripts to which it can be related are still in Egypt. One, in the Coptic Patriarchate collection (MS Bibl. 196), a Lectionary dated to 1291 AD and made for a private patron, is also inscribed with the names of the evangelists in Greek. The St Mark portrait in this manuscript (Fig. 12) shares similar facial features, although these are more arabised in the Cambridge miniature, and the same pose, as well as the convention of including a building in the background.[34] The portrait of St John in the Coptic Patriarchate manuscript is, however, closer on matters such as the folds of the draperies, and also includes the detail of the cloth on which the evangelist is seated.[35] The same is true of the portrait of St Mark added to a Coptic Gospel book of 1256/7 AD in the Coptic Museum (Bib. 93), although it again also has some stylistic differences.[36] It is likely, then, that the book was made for a private individual in Cairo at the end of the thirteenth century.

Other elements can frequently be found in the repertoire of Coptic, Syrian, and Armenian illumination of the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries, including the decorative wooden thrones and the lectern stand shaped like a fish. The thrones with wooden patterning appear in the Coptic Gospels Huntingdon 17 in the Bodleian Library of 1173 AD.[37] They also feature in the representations of the evangelists in the two thirteenth-century Syriac lectionaries in the British Library (Add. 7170) and the Vatican (Syr. 559), the latter now known to date to 1260 AD.[38] The bookstand in the shape of the Christian eucharistic symbol of the fish also appears in the portrait of St John in the Syriac Buchanan Bible in Cambridge of

[34] J. Leroy, *Les manuscrits coptes et coptes-arabes illustrés*, Paris, 1974, 1975, pp. 178-80 with plate 96,1, reproduced in colour in N.S. Atalla, *Illustrations from Coptic Manuscripts*, Cairo 2000, pp. 28-9.

[35] Leroy, *Manuscrits coptes*, p. 179 with plate 97,1; reproduced in colour in N.S. Atalla, *Coptic Manuscripts*, p. 30.

[36] Leroy, *Manuscrits coptes*, pp. 177-8 with plate 109,1; reproduced in colour in Atalla, *Coptic Manuscripts*, p. 101 (wrongly labelled).

[37] Leroy, *Manuscrits coptes*, pp. 110-13 with plates 39,1-2, and 40, 1-2.

[38] J. Leroy, *Les manuscripts syriaques à peintures conservés dans les bibliothèques d'Europe et d'Orient*, Paris, 1964, pp. 281, 303, with plates 70,1-2, and 71,1.

the early 1190s (University Library 0o.1.1, 2).[39] It is also found in Armenian illumination, such as the portrait of Luke in the late twelfth century Gospel book in Jerusalem (Armenian Patriarchate 1760), the thirteenth century portrait of Matthew in a Gospel book made in Sis in 1269 AD now in Venice (Mekhitharist Library 600), and that of Mark in another from shortly before 1273 in Erevan (Matenadaran 7648).[40]

Frontispiece page to St Luke's Gospel (f. 147r) (Fig. 9)

The frontispiece to St Luke consists of intersecting geometric shapes. Above and below are circles, with half circles to left and right. In the centre is a circle expanded to form a quatrefoil shape, with arch shapes above and below, and arch shapes extending into the semi-circles to right and left. This is in blue, filled with delicately-drawn leaves in gold with green and brown buds. The remaining parts of the semicircles to left and right are in reddish brown with gold. The circles above and below are intersected into four segments, with each opposite pair matching. The upper and lower segments are in blue with gold buds, with those to left and right in reddish brown. The four corners of the rectangle as a whole, which measures 17 x 11.3. cm, have pale brown and green lotus buds against a black background, interspersed with tiny dots in groups of three. The hasp, in the form of a circle appended to the left of the rectangle, is gilded with a lotus drawn in ink with green in its inner circle.

First frontispiece page to St John's Gospel (f. 242v) (Fig. 10)

This ornamental page is predominantly in gold and blue, with a blue frame drawn around it. Within the rectangle (measuring 17 x 11.2 cm) the cross in the centre is the focal feature. This is enclosed in an eight-pointed star formed at the juncture of the intersecting

[39] Leroy, *Manuscripts syriaques*, p. 248 with plate 64,1; L.-A. Hunt, 'The Syriac Buchanan Bible in Cambridge: Book Illumination in Syria, Cilicia and Jerusalem of the Later Twelfth Century', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 57, 1991, pp. 331-69; rpr. in L.-A. Hunt, *Byzantium, Eastern Christendom and Islam: Art at the Crossroads of the Medieval Mediterranean*, London, 2000, vol. II, pp. 23-77.

[40] S. Der Nersessian, *Miniature Painting in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia from the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Century*, Washington DC, 1993, vol. I, pp. 23, 88-9 with vol. II, plates, 333 and 332.

arcs which fan out across the page. Interlocking shapes are formed as these arcs emanate outwards, with the line of the arcs picked out in white. Each 'cell' of the design is carefully drawn with leaved scrolls, and symmetrically arranged leaf motifs. Although still visible, the red-brown colour is now rubbed from the background of the smaller panels. The irregular pointed four-sided shapes at the four corners are coloured in pale green. The hasp to the left of the main rectangle also contains a foliage motif. The number 72 is written in a European hand below the decorated rectangle, showing the positioning of the page at an earlier point in the manuscript before later rebinding.

Second frontispiece page to St John's Gospel (f. 244r) (Fig. 11)

This frontispiece page would have formed a pair with the one that is now f. 242v. The penmanship is essentially the same, except that the vertical of the central cross is wider. Pigment from this folio has rubbed onto the preceding one (f. 243v).

The geometric decoration, coloured blue, red and gold with some pale green, can be viewed in the context of Mamlūk-style ornament in both Christian and Muslim holy books. A good parallel for the former dual frontispiece, now separated as ff. 242v and 244r respectively, is the illuminated and gilded page in the Coptic Gospel book Vatican Biblioteca MS Apostolica Copto 9 of 1204-5 (Fig. 13) which has a very similar focus on the cross in the centre as the point from which all the ornament relates.[41] The spikier, more triangular framing, as well as the larger lotus motifs in the frontispiece to Luke on f. 147r find a parallel in the ornamental frontispiece pages in a Gospel book in the Coptic Museum in Old Cairo (Bib. 92), of which the frontispiece to St Luke's Gospel is shown here (Fig. 14).[42] Made for the church of al-Muʿallaqa in 1272, the star designs here are comparable with woodwork in the screens in Coptic churches in Old Cairo.[43] An Islamic parallel for the more angular

[41] Leroy, *Manuscrits coptes*, pp. 148-9, with colour plate A.

[42] Leroy, *Manuscrits coptes*, p. 65 with plate 9, 2 (wrongly labelled); reproduced in colour in Atalla, *Coptic Manuscripts*, p. 103,3 and 104.

[43] L.-A. Hunt, 'Iconic and Aniconic: Unknown Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century Byzantine Icons in their Woodwork Settings', *Poikila Byzantina* 6, *Varia* II, Bonn, 1987, [pp. 33-48]; rpr. in Hunt, *Byzantium, Eastern Christendom and Islam*, vol. I, [pp.

use of geometric shapes in f. 147r of the Cambridge manuscript is to be found in the double frontispiece to the second volume of the Qur'an of Baybars al- Jāshnagīr (BL Add. 22406-13) painted by the artist Muḥammad Ibn Mubādir.[44] According to David James,[45] this Qur'an, written between 1305 and 6 AD, with the illumination following, was intended for the *khānqāh* built in Cairo by Baybars during these years.

This second Cambridge Gospel book was, then, made in Cairo or Old Cairo in the late thirteenth century, probably for a private patron, either for his own use or for donation to a church. The devotion of the patron to the Coptic Church is clear from the emphasis given to the text in the early part of St Mark's Gospel, where there is a concentration of gilded rosettes punctuating the text (Fig. 6). A later reader who recorded his name in a note in the manuscript asserted his Coptic religious affiliation by adding the title 'orthodox' after his name.

Conclusion

The two Gospel books in Cambridge, with their hitherto unstudied miniatures, introduce different ends of the spectrum of the process of collation, although in the same place and at approximately the same time. The first, MS Gg. 5.33, shows the adoption of Constantinopolitan Byzantine miniatures of c. 1100 into an Arabic Gospel book of known textual lineage in 1272 AD. Here the old Byzantine miniatures clearly provided *gravitas*. The other book, MS Add. 1860, shows, on the other hand, the actual process of collation. This 'work in progress', exposed visually through the illustrations, demonstrates

60-96] p. 61 with Fig. 12 (St Mark frontispiece page).

[44] D. James, *Qur'āns of the Mamlūks*, London, 1988, pp. 34-45, cat. no. 1, p. 220 with Fig. 22. For links between Christian and Muslim painting in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, see R.S. Nelson, 'An Icon at Mt. Sinai and Christian Painting in Muslim Egypt during the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries', *Art Bulletin* 65, 1985, pp. 201-18; L.-A. Hunt, 'Christian-Muslim Relations'; *eadem*, 'Manuscript Production by Christians in 13th-14th Century Greater Syria and Mesopotamia and Related Areas', *Aram* 9-10, 1997, pp. 1-48; rpr. in Hunt, *Byzantium, Eastern Christianity and Islam*, vol. II, pp. 153-97.

[45] James, *Qur'āns of the Mamlūks*, pp. 36-7.

that the text has been properly researched and depends on its forebears in Greek, Coptic and Syriac. Here Byzantine-style imagery is combined with Arab-style ornament, with a more contemporary approach taken in the aniconic pages by the living artist. The Arab Christian holy book is related to, but distinctive from, the Arab Islamic holy book.

Both books show that in early Mamlūk Cairo there were private patrons who wanted to personalize their books. Scribes and artists had access to libraries for the purposes of copying and collating in order to facilitate this. The presence of the illustrations, a matter of taste, also serves to endorse the accuracy of the text. Both manuscripts reflect the ambition in the later thirteenth century to establish a stable version in the form of the so-called 'Alexandrian Vulgate', even if this process was not always documented and footnoted in the way that Ibn al-'Assāl's version had been in the middle of the century. Finally, it is a nice turn of fate that in the sixteenth century the first Gospel book came into the possession of the Venetian Michael Mambre, himself a translator and mediator between two cultures, and then continued on to Erpenius as part of its journey to contribute to the establishment of the first standard printed Arabic version of the Gospels.

Appendix1

Cambridge University Library MS Gg. 5.33

Contents: Four Gospels in Arabic

F. 1 Loose leaf
Ff. 2r-3v Index of Contents, St Matthew's Gospel
F. 4 Blank vellum page (onto which the red of the punctuation of previous folio has rubbed off)
Ff. 5v-51r Gospel of St Matthew

F. 52v Portrait of St Mark
Ff. 53r-54v Index of Contents, St Mark's Gospel
Ff. 55v-83r St Mark's Gospel

F. 84v Portrait of St Luke

Ff. 85r-87v Index of Contents, St Luke's Gospel
Ff. 88v-138r St Luke's Gospel

F. 139v Portrait of St John (The edge of the left side of the folio is stuck onto the next folio, 140r)
Ff. 140r-141v Index of Contents, St John's Gospel
Ff. 142v-181r St John's Gospel

Folios: 185 folios, with one binding leaf at the end. Paper, with added portraits on vellum. Folios measure 23.7 x 16.6 cm, numbered in Arabic letters on the top left of the recto.

Ruling: 17 lines per page in a single column of text, 18.7 x 10.7 cm.

Script: Clear naskhī script in black ink; punctuation and headings in red.

Quiring: 18 quires in quinions, with the three vellum pages added.

Binding: Later binding of brown leather, stamped, with a cartouche in the centre. Flap with clasp missing. Repaired spine. Possibly 16-17 century.

Colophon and Inscriptions: An added colophon (f. 181r) states that the manuscript, dated 988 AM/1272 AD, was copied from one written by John, Bishop of Kift. This latter manuscript had in its turn been copied from a book collated by Shaykh Nash al-Imām Ibn ʿIzzu al-Kufāt. F. 181v has a later reader's plea for salvation, dated 1544 AM, below a memorial for an individual.

On the verso of the flyleaf is the name of Michael Mambre (Michel Mambr) indicated as interpreter to the Venetians. His ownership of the manuscript is also signalled on the flyleaf (f. 1r), with his name (as Micael Mambre) below that of Cyril (Patriarch of Alexandria). Michael Mambre's name also appears at the end of the manuscript on (unnumbered) f. 186r. His is probably the hand that has added later annotations. These are in Arabic, Syriac, and Latin, with one in Greek/Arabic in the right margin on f. 11r. The marginal Latin hand which also includes Arabic up to f. 56v could be the same as that giving Michael Mambre's name at the beginning and end of the manuscript.

Appendix 2

Cambridge University Library MS Add. 1860

Contents: Four Gospels in Arabic.

F. 2r Text preceded by *Bismillah*, 'In the name of God' and the title in red
F. 4r Blank with traces of paint visible, rubbed off from the former portrait of Matthew opposite
Ff. 4v-86r Gospel of Matthew with title on first 3 lines on f. 4v in gold
[*F. 86v-87r* blank, with later text added]
[*F. 87v* later text]

Ff. 88r-92v Text preceded by *Bismillah*, 'In the name of God' and the title in gold
[*F. 93r* blank]
F. 93v Portrait of St Mark (19.9 x 13.5 cm)
[*f. 94r* Blank, with paint rubbed off from portrait]
Ff. 94v-145v Gospel of St Mark preceded in, *Bismillah*, 'In the name of God', and the title in gold
[*F. 146v* blank]

F. 147r Carpet page frontispiece (17 x 11.3 cm)
Ff. 147v-155r Text preceded by *Bismillah*, 'In the name of God' and the title in gold
[*Ff. 155v-156r* blank]
F. 156v Portrait of St Luke (21 x 13 cm).
[*F. 157r* blank]
Ff. 157v-242r Gospel of St Luke preceded by *Bismillah*, 'In the name of God' and the title in gold.

F. 242v Geometric Carpet page (17 x 11.2. cm)
[*Ff. 243r-243v* blank]
F. 244r Geometric Carpet page (16.8 x 11cm)
[*F. 249r* blank]
F. 249v Portrait of St John (21 x 13.7cm)
[*F. 250r* blank]
Ff. 250v-313r Gospel of St John with *Bismillah*, 'In the name of God', and the title in gold

Folios: 315 folios, with 3 binding leaves at the end, 23 x 17 cm. Paper. Folios numbered in Arabic at top left recto. The portrait of Mark (f. 93v) has the number 221 in the left margin towards the base of the miniature; the portrait of Luke (f. 156v) the number 158 below the portrait; and the portrait of John (f. 249v) 65 below the portrait. The outer edge of the folios in girded.

Ruling: 11 lines to a page, single column for Gospel text, 18 x 11.75 cm.

Script: Clear *naskhī* in black ink, written by more than one scribe. Chapter headings are in gold outlined in black, with gold rosettes, especially in the prefatory material and St Mark's Gospel, some with coloured centres, e.g. ff. 89v-92v, 95v-96r,148, and blue centres, e.g. f. 215v. Red marginal numbering. More than one scribe at work.

Quiring: All pages have been cut out and reset in the rebinding.

Binding: Dark brown with gold eight-pointed star pattern at the front and back, with palmettes. Probably 18th century. Labelled as the Arabic Gospels in Arabic transliterated on the spine.

Inscriptions and dedications: F. 1r Manuscript stamped 8 Aug. '78. F. 1v: Dedication in French from the Jesuit C. Sicard to M. l'avocat Grougnar(d), Cairo, 30 March 1725. 1r: An *ex libris* of C. Brinsden in Latin, given by D. Grougnard in 1734. A note follows in English stating that Brinsden had shown it to Father Montfaucon in Paris at the monastery of St Germain des Près, who believed the manuscript to date to the 12-13th centuries. He then showed it twice to Dr. Thomas Hunt, professor of Arabic and canon of Christchurch Oxford, on 9 September 1766 and 5 September 1774, who expressed the view that the manuscript was 500 years old (i.e. dateable to the thirteenth century).

There are Arabic inscriptions added after St Matthew's (ff. 86v-87v) and St John's (f. 313v) Gospels.

Fig. 1. Portrait of St Mark, and beginning of Gospel. Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg. 5.33, ff. 52v-53r. (Photo: Published by permission of the syndics of Cambridge University Library)

Fig. 2. Portrait of St Luke, and beginning of Gospel. Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg. 5.33, ff. 84v-85r. (Photo: Published by permission of the syndics of Cambridge University Library)

Fig. 3. Portrait of St John. Cambridge University Library, MS Gg. 5.33, ff. 139v-140r. (Photo: Published by permission of the syndics of Cambridge University Library)

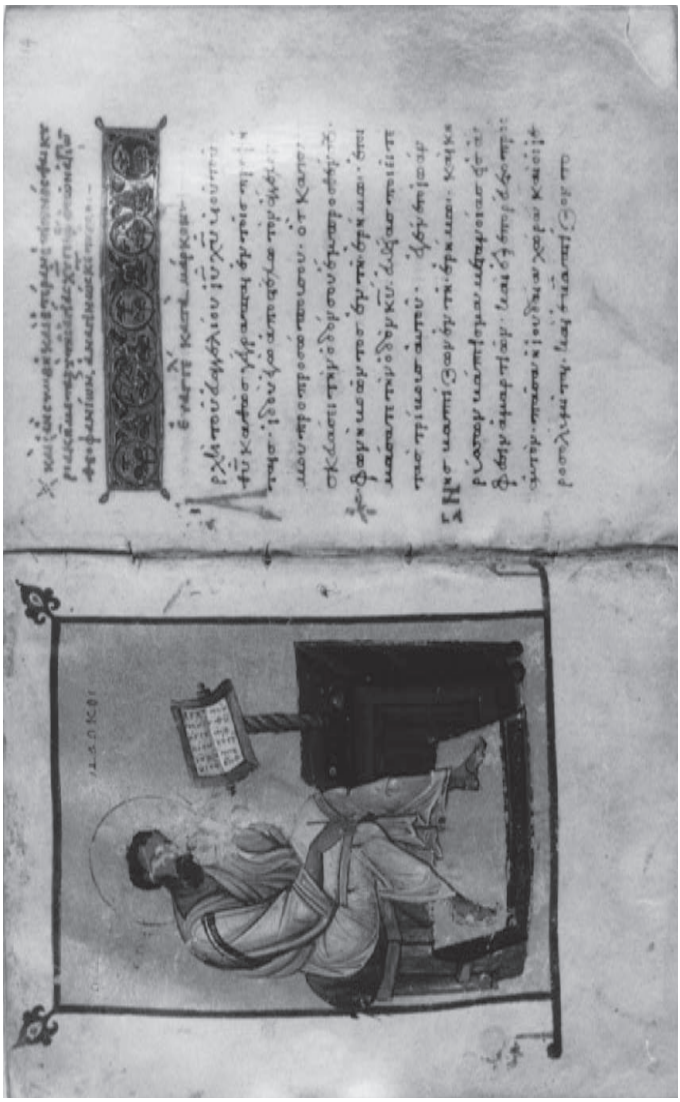

Fig. 4. Portrait of St Mark. Birmingham University Library, Mingana Collection, MS Algerina Peckover 561, ff. 113v-114r. (Photo: L.-A. Hunt)

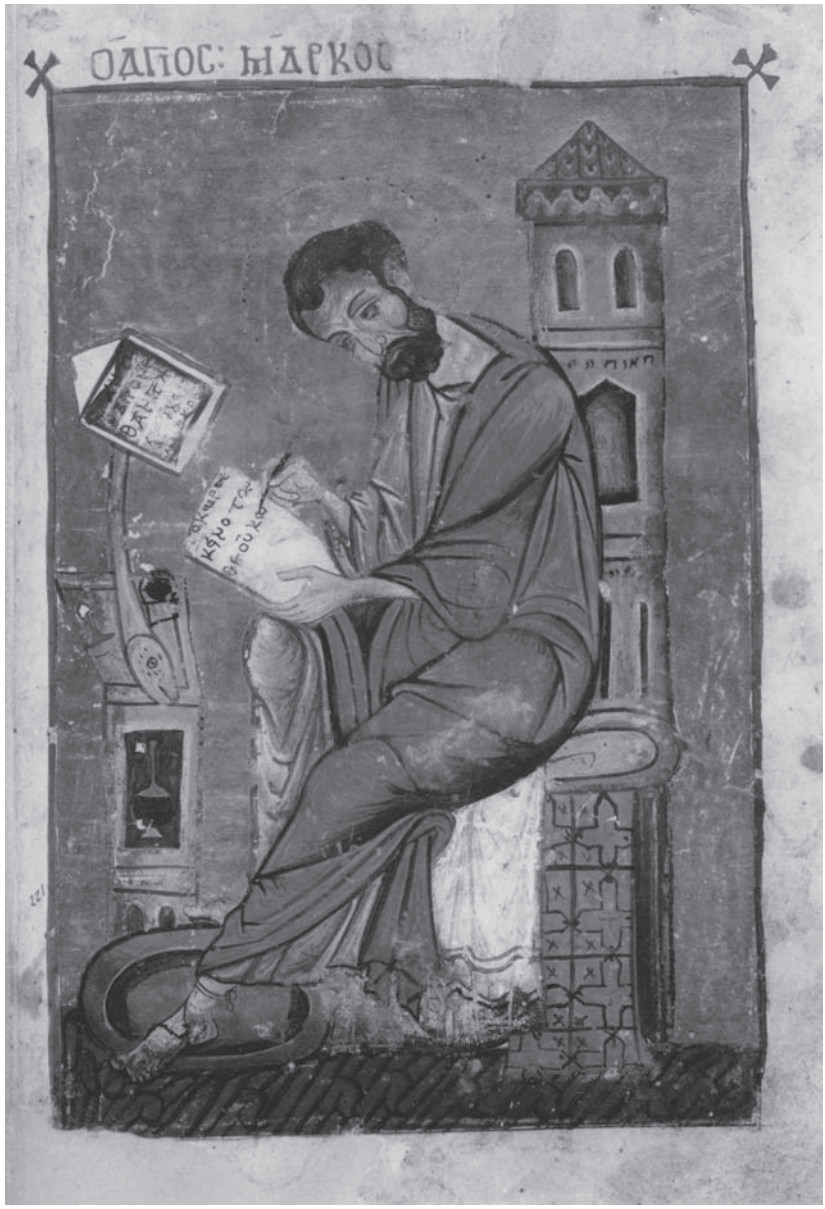

Fig. 5. Portrait of St Mark. Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 1860, f. 93v. (Photo: Published by permission of the syndics of Cambridge University Library)

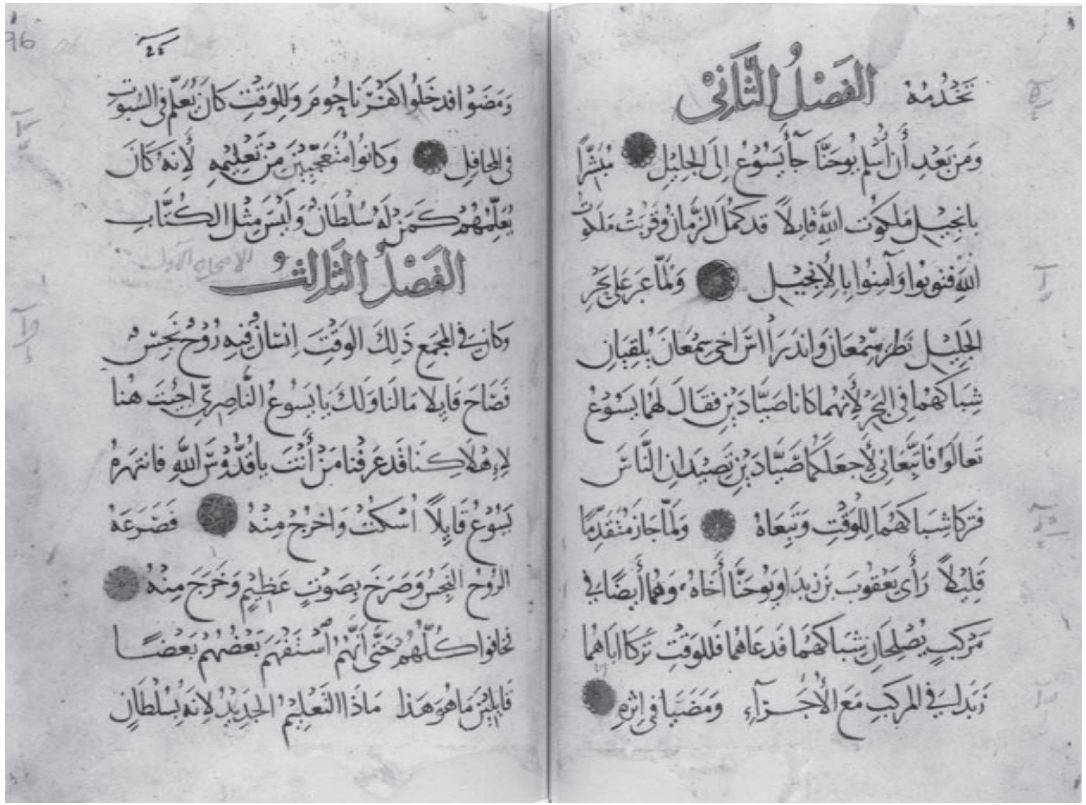

Fig. 6. Text of St Mark's Gospel, Chs 23-. Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 1860, ff. 95v-96r. (Photo: Published by permission of the syndics of Cambridge University Library)

Fig. 7. Portrait of St Luke. Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 1860, f. 156v. (Photo: Published by permission of the syndics of Cambridge University Library)

Fig. 8. Portrait of John. Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 1860, f. 249v. (Photo: Published by permission of the syndics of Cambridge University Library)

Fig. 9. Frontispiece to St Luke's Gospel. Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 1860, f. 147r. (Photo: Published by permission of the syndics of Cambridge University Library)

Fig. 10. First frontispiece to St John's Gospel. Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 1860, f. 242v. (Photo: Published by permission of the syndics of Cambridge University Library)

Fig. 11. Second frontispiece to St John's Gospel. Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 1860, f. 244r. (Photo: Published by permission of the syndics of Cambridge University Library)

Fig. 12. Portrait of St Mark. Cairo, Coptic Patriarchate, MS Bibl. 196, f. 111v. (Photo: L. -A. Hunt)

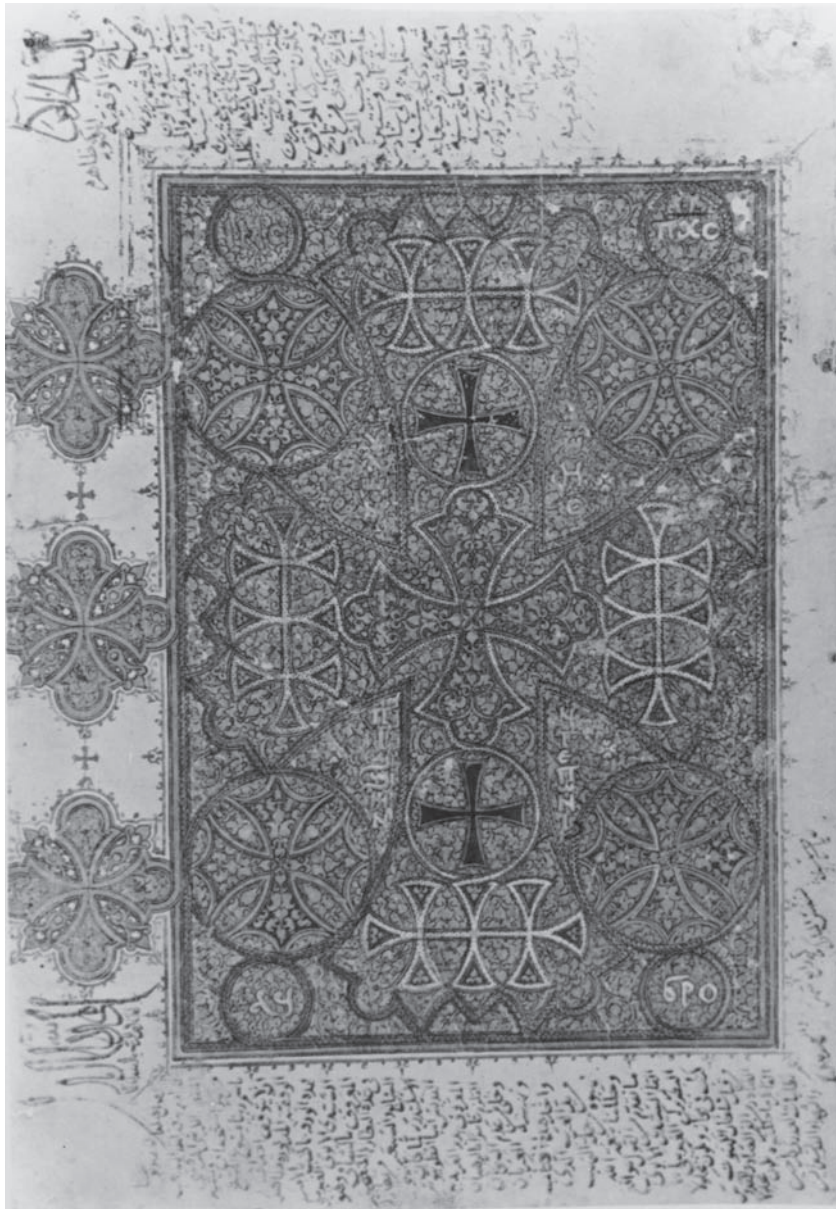

Fig. 13. Cross frontispiece to Gospel Book. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica, MS Copto 9, f. 22v. (Photo: After Leroy, *Manuscrits Coptes*)

Fig. 14. Frontispiece to St Luke's Gospel. Coptic Museum, Old Cairo, MS Bibl. 92, f. 148v. (Photo: L.-A. Hunt)

A NESTORIAN ARABIC PENTATEUCH USED IN WESTERN ISLAMIC LANDS

JUAN PEDRO MONFERRER-SALA

Introduction

The number of texts produced by the Arabized Christians of al-Andalus is scarce and the information about them is not as plentiful as we would wish.[1] However, the examples that are extant today are indicative of the degree of arabization that was reached by some strands of the Christian population,[2] as well as for the intrinsic value yielded by such arabization.[3] I would like to emphasize this point, because we may draw invaluable and suggestive data from a thorough analysis of these texts for both techniques of translation and exegesis. They may also help to set into a more definite context many aspects that relate to the cultural formation of some strands of the Arabized Christian population,[4] and specify more clearly the

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[1] H. Kassis, 'Arabic-speaking Christians in al-Andalus in an age of turmoil (fifth-eleventh century until a.h. 478/a.d. 1085)', *Al-Qanṭara* 15, 1994, [pp. 401-22] p. 403.

[2] A case of this 'cultural elite' is that studied by Á. López y López, 'El conde de los cristianos Rabī' b. Teodulfo, exactor y jefe de la guardia palatina del emir al-Ḥakam I', *Al-Andalus-Magreb* 7, 1999, pp. 169-84. Among several studies on 'Mozarabs', see Mª J. Viguera Molins, 'Sobre mozárabes', in *Proyección histórica de España en sus tres culturas: Castilla y León, América y el Mediterráneo. III: Árabe, hebreo e historia de la medicina*, Valladolid, 1993, pp. 205-16; idem, 'Cristianos y judíos en al-Andalus', *Cuadernos de Estudios medievales y Ciencias y Técnicas Historiográficas* 20-3, 1995-8, pp. 619-33; M. de Epalza, 'Mozarabs: an emblematic Christian minority in Islamic al-Andalus', in S.K. Jayyusi, ed., *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, Leiden, 1992, pp. 149-70 and D. Wasserstein, *The Rise and Fall of the Party-Kings: Politics and Society in Islamic Spain, 1002-1086*, Princeton NJ, 1985, pp. 224-46.

[3] On Arabization among Christians in Islamic Spain, M.A. Gallego, 'The languages of Medieval Iberia and their religious dimension', *Medieval Encounters* 9, 2003, [pp. 105-37] pp. 113-14, 119-22, 135-7.

[4] The Latin culture of the Cordovan Mozarabs in the ninth century has been analyzed by my colleague P.P. Herrera Roldán, 'Una aproximación al legado latino de los mozárabes cordobeses', *Meridies* 1, 1995, pp. 9-22; see also his book *Cultura y lengua latinas entre los mozárabes cordobeses del s. IX*, Córdoba, 1995. On the Toledan Mozarabs between the eighth and eleventh centuries, see M.C. Díaz y Díaz, 'La vida literaria entre los mozárabes de Toledo (siglos VIII-XI)', in *Arte y Cultura Mozárabe*: *Ponencias y*

Islamic influences in particular instances,[5] and furthermore identify examples that originated in the Eastern Christian communities.[6]

Bearing this in mind, the role played by Eastern Christians who arrived in al-Andalus must not be forgotten.[7] Among these, some of the best known were the Byzantine monks who settled in the Valle del Ebro during the tenth and eleventh centuries, the Palestinian monks in al-Andalus in the ninth century,[8] and not least the Peninsular Christians who travelled in eastern lands, and Eastern

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comunicaciones presentadas al I Congreso Internacional de Estudios Mozárabes (Toledo, 1975), Toledo, 1979, pp. 71-100. See also ʿUbāda Kuḥayla, *Taʾrīkh al-Naṣārā fī al-Andalus*, Cairo, 1414/1993, pp. 115-38.

[5] See in this respect M.-T. Urvoy, 'Influence islamique sur le vocabulaire d'un psautier arabe d'al-Andalus', *Al-Qanṭara* 15, 1994, pp. 509-17, and the proposed 'idioms calques' by P.S. van Koningsveld, *The Latin-Arabic Glossary of the Leiden University Library: A Contribution to the Study of Mozarabic Manuscripts and Literature*, Leiden, 1977, p. 55; idem, 'Christian Arabic literature from medieval Spain: an attempt at periodization', in S.K. Samir and J.S. Nielsen, eds, *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period, 750-1258*, Leiden, 1994, [pp. 203-24] pp. 216-17.

[6] On this, see G. Levi della Vida, 'Los mozárabes entre Occidente y el Islam', *Qurṭuba* 2, 1997, pp. 303-23 (Spanish translation by J.P. Monferrer-Sala); J.P. Monferrer-Sala, 'Les Chrétiens d'al-Andalus et leurs manifestations culturelles', in G. Saupin, R. Fabre and M. Launay, eds, *La Tolérance: Colloque international de Nantes, mai 1998. Quatrième centenaire de l'édit de Nantes*, Rennes, 1999, pp. 363-70; idem, '*Yā abatā alladhī fī al-samāwāt*... Notas sobre antiguas versiones árabes del «Padre Nuestro»', *Al-Qanṭara* 21, 2000, pp. 277-305; idem, '*Mēmrā* del Pseudo Metodio y Yōnṭōn: notas a propósito de un posible origen de la leyenda oriental llegada a Hispania en el s. VII', *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos* 50, 2001, pp. 213-30.

[7] An approach in S.F. Ardanaz, 'Monaquismo oriental en la Hispania de los siglos VI-X', in A. González Blanco, ed., *Antigüedad y cristianismo. Monografías históricas sobre la antigüedad tardía. XVI. Los columbarios de La Rioja*, Murcia, 1999, pp. 203-14, esp. pp. 204, 207-9 and 210-13. See also D. Millet-Gérard, *Chrétiens mozarabes et culture islamique dans l'Espagne des VIII^e^-IX^e^ siècles*, Paris, 1984, pp. 153-81 and T.E. Burmann, *Religious Polemic and the Intellectual History of the Mozarabs, c. 1050-1200*, Leiden, 1994, pp. 95-124.

[8] On the monk George who arrived in al-Andalus from the monastery of Mār Sābā, see L.A. García Moreno, 'Monjes y profecías cristianas próximo-orientales en al-Andalus del s. IX', *Hispania Sacra* 51, 1999, [pp. 91-100] pp. 95-100; E. Flórez, *España Sagrada. Teatro geográphico-histórico de la Iglesia de España: Origen, divisiones y límites de todas sus Provincias. Antigüedad, Traslaciones, y estado antiguo y preferente de sus Sillas, con varias Disertaciones críticas*, Madrid, 1752, vol. X, pp. 379-80 (tractate 33, chapter II); Levi della Vida, 'Los mozárabes', pp. 309-11. On the Mozarabic communities between the seventh and tenth centuries, see R. Castejón Calderón, 'Los mozárabes del s. VIII al s. X', *Boletín de la Real Academia de Córdoba* 102, 1981, pp. 221-39. Interesting analyses of specific ideological aspects of the Mozarabs are included in J. Gil, 'Judíos y cristianos en Hispania (s. VIII y IX), *Hispania Sacra* 31, 1978-9, pp. 1-80.

Christians who eventually settled in the Peninsula,[9] among whom were probably some Nestorians.[10]

We do not know very much about the text or texts of the Arabic Old Testament that the communities of the Arabized Christians, and also Jews, used in al-Andalus or in North Africa.[11] A model example is the version of the Book of Psalms made by Ḥafṣ b. Albar al-Qūṭī.[12] We already know that the author of the *Leiden Glossary* encountered some Old Testament books in their Arabic translation, as well as a Pentateuch in the same language, which is believed to derive from a translation made in Syria (*min tarjamat al-Sha'm*),[13] a text which may probably be identified with the version of the famous Melkite from Ḥarrān, al-Ḥārith b. Sinān b. Sunbāṭ (c. tenth century),[14] a copy of which is kept in the Monastery of El Escorial (Cod. Ar. 1857). The Andalusian Muslim Ibn Barrajān, among others, also quoted Old Testament passages, from the Pentateuch in particular, in Arabic.[15] Thus, we have some fragmentary information about translations into Arabic from the Old Testament made in al-Andalus, and in some remarkable cases

[9] M.C. Díaz y Díaz, 'La circulation des manuscrits dans la Péninsule Ibérique du VIII^{e} au XI^{e} siècle', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 12, 1969, [pp. 383-92] p. 384.

[10] M. de Epalza, 'Félix de Urgel: influencias islámicas encubiertas de judaísmo y los mozárabes del siglo VIII', *Acta Historica et Archaeologica Mediaevalia* [= *Homenatge al Dr. Manuel Riu i Riu*] 22, 1999-2001, [pp. 31-66] pp. 45-6.

[11] On the Jews in al-Andalus, see R.P. Scheindlin, 'The Jews in Muslim Spain', in Jayyusi, ed., *The Legacy*, pp. 188-200; F. Díaz Esteban, 'Los judíos en la España musulmana', in J.M^{a} Carabaza Bravo and A.T.M. Essawy, eds, *El saber en al-Andalus. Textos y estudios, II*, Seville, 1999, pp. 165-77; and M^{a} J. Viguera Molins, 'Sobre la historia de los judíos en al-Andalus', in A. Sáenz-Badillos ed., *Judíos entre árabes y cristianos. Luces y sombras de una convivencia*, Córdoba, 2000, pp. 31-51. Still useful is A. Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain*, 2 vols, Philadelphia PA, 1973 and 1979. On the North African Jews, mainly Moroccan, see H.Z. Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews in North Africa*, vol. I, *From Antiquity to the Sixteenth Century*, Leiden, 1974; D. Corcos, *Studies in the History of the Jews of Morocco*, Jerusalem, 1976; and S. Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2nd edn, revised and enlarged, New York, 1980, particularly vol. XVII: *Late Middle Ages and Era of European Expansion, 1200-1650*.

[12] See the edition by M.-Th. Urvoy, *Le Psautier mozarabe de Hafs Le Goth*, Toulouse, 1994.

[13] Van Koningsveld, *Latin-Arabic Glossary*, p. 65.

[14] On this author and his translation, see J. Nasrallah, 'Deux versions Melchites partielles de la Bible du IX^{e} et du X^{e} siècles', *Oriens Christianus* 64, 1980, pp. 206-10.

[15] Ibn Barrajān, *Sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā (Comentario sobre los nombres más bellos de Dios)*, ed. P. de la Torre, Madrid, 2000, p. 43, cf. Gen. 1.26 on p. 431, line 16 (f. 272r).

we can see that the source used by Jewish writers was Christian.[16]

Cod. Ar. 234: contextualizing notes

Cod. Ar. 234 from the Staatsbibliothek in Munich contains two texts.[17] The second is a version of the Gospels, while the first is an Arabic version of the Pentateuch. One might assume that this text came from a Jewish community, since it is hard to believe that a Muslim would have made such a translation. This is because the part played by Muslims in translations of Jewish and Christian texts would be only to make copies for polemical purposes, as typical uses of passages from the Old Testament by Muslim authors[18] indicate. It is true that Ibn Ḥazm, like al-Imām al-Qurṭubī,[19] makes use of Hebrew nouns (book titles)[20] and also expressions in Arabic transliteration.[21] But such indications of knowledge do not undermine

[16] See for instance the case of Ibn 'Ezra', who quoted two fragments from Ḥafṣ b. Albar al-Qūṭī: Mošê b. 'Ezra', *Kītāb al-muḥādhara wa-al-mudākara*, ed. and trans. M.A. Más, 2 vols, Madrid, 1985, vol. I, pp. 47 and 262 (Arabic text), vol. II, pp. 47 and 283 (Spanish translation).

[17] J. Aumer, *Die arabischen Handschriften der K. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek in Muenchen*, Munich, 1886, p. 75 (n. 234).

[18] Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-fiṣal fī al-milal wa-al-ahwā' wa-al-niḥal*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣr and 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Umayra, 5 vols, Beirut, 1416/1996; al-Khazrajī, *Maqāmᵏ al-ṣulbān*, ed. 'Abd al-Majīd al-Sharfī, Tunis, 1975; al-Imām al-Qurṭubī, *Al-iʿlām bi-mā fī dīn al-naṣārā min al-fasād wa-al-awhām wa-izhār maḥāsin dīn al-islām wa-ithbāt nubuwwat nabīnā Muḥammad*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā, Cairo, 1980. See also E. García Gómez, 'Polémica religiosa entre Ibn Ḥazm e Ibn al-Nagrīla', *Al-Andalus* 4, 1936-9, pp. 1-28; R. Arnáldez, 'Controverse d'Ibn Hazm contre Nagrila le juif', *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée* 13-14, 1973, pp. 41-8. The Old Testament quotations from the 'morisco milieu' are mainly in Latin and Castillian, but also Catalonian; see, for instance, the quotations from the Psalter included in a 'Castillian aljamiado' text, together with a 'Latin aljamiado' in W. Hoenerbarch, *Spanisch-islamische Urkunden aus der Zeit der Naṣriden und Moriscos*, Bonn, 1965, p. 298.

[19] J.P. Monferrer-Sala, 'Siete citas hebreas, más una aramea, transcritas al árabe en el *Iʿlām* del Imām al-Qurṭubī', *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos* 47, 1999, pp. 393-403.

[20] See J. P. Monferrer-Sala, 'De libros e iglesias en el Oriente musulmán. Apuntes de trabajo', *Boletín de la Asociación Española de Orientalistas* 34, 1998, [pp. 159-83] esp. pp. 170-5, referring particularly to Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*.

[21] A case of this type of literature can be seen in 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Islāmī, *Al-sayf al-mawdūd fī al-radd 'alā aḥbār al-yahūd (Espada extendida para refutar a los sabios judíos)*, ed. and trans. E. Alfonso, Madrid, 1998, *passim*, particularly p. 38. Cf. the information discussed by Samīr Qaddūrī, 'Ḥaqā'iq jadīda bi-sha'n naqd Ibn Ḥazm li-asfār al-

the fact that North African and Andalusian Muslims used such versions only for polemical purposes.

From the ninth century on North African Jews gave up Aramaic and used Arabic as their cultural vehicle, although they still remained connected to the religious-cultural influence of the Babylonian and Palestinian centres,[22] and even of the Greek, as is proved by the huge number of manuscripts discovered in the famous Cairo Genizah, from which probably the oldest MS of a Judaeo-Arabic Bible[23] comes. Thanks to a document among the enormous number of manuscripts placed in the Genizah, we know that among the copyists' activities was the preservation of biblical texts in Judaeo-Arabic. In this way, we also know that at least one copyist from al-Maḥalla copied an extant Arabic translation of the Pentateuch.[24]

The North African cities of Qayrawān and Fās were famous as centres of exegesis, where commentaries on the Torah were produced.[25] But the progressive loss of Aramaic, as the tenth-century *Risāla* of Yehudah b. Quraysh[26] proves, forced Jewish writers to make use of Arabic to replace the Aramaic Targums and to make available the text of the Bible to the Jewish community.[27] Thus, Arabic versions of the Torah with a North African provenance written in Hebrew/Aramaic characters[28] are known.[29]

Tawrāt', *Al-Fayṣal* 347, 2005, pp. 42-55, esp. pp. 49-55.

[22] Hirschberg, *History of the Jews in North Africa*, pp. 300-4.

[23] J. Blau, 'On a fragment of the oldest Judaeo-Arabic Bible translation extant', in J. Blau and S.C. Reif, eds, *Genizah Research After Ninety Years: The Case of Judaeo-Arabic*, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 31-9.

[24] S.D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Genizah*, vol. II, *The Community*, Berkeley CA, 1971, p. 238; on the term *nāsikh* when referring to the copyist's task, see p. 229. On the relation between Moroccan and Cairene Jews, see Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. I, *Economic Foundations*, Berkeley CA, 1967, p. 21.

[25] Hirschberg, *History of the Jews*, pp. 298-361. For the Jewish community in Fās from the middle of the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, see J.S. Gerber, *Jewish Society in Fez, 1450-1700: Studies in Communal and Economic Life*, Leiden, 1980.

[26] Hebrew edition by D. Becker, *The Risala of Judah ben Quraysh: A Critical Edition*, Tel-Aviv, 1984.

[27] See C. del Valle Rodríguez, *La Escuela Hebrea de Córdoba: Los orígenes de la Escuela filológica hebrea de Córdoba*, Madrid, 1981, pp. 634-7; Hirschberg, *History of the Jews*, pp. 308-9.

[28] H. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, Princeton NJ, 1992, p. 117, making reference to the translation made by Saʿadya Gaon.

[29] See, for instance, our notes on some *hapax legomena*, J.P. Monferrer-Sala, 'Al-

Despite all this, our Pentateuch comes neither from an Islamic nor from a Jewish background. Rather, as we shall see, the Arabic version of the Pentateuch contained in Cod. Ar. 234 was made by an Eastern Christian from the text of the Peshiṭṭā. It is possible that the translation was made in the West, though it must have been made by an Eastern Christian. It is also possible that it was made in the East and was brought to the West, the outcome of some Western Christian's journey to the east, or of some Eastern Christian's journey to the West. But according to possibility, it must have been made by an Eastern Christian.

Another question is the exact text on which the Arabic translation was based. As the examples provided below indicate, the translation points to the text of the Peshiṭṭā used by the Nestorians or Assyrians, the dialectal variant of which is East Syriac.[30] This surprising point is extremely important, because we do not have any evidence of the existence in al-Andalus of texts from such a background.

This being so, it becomes clear that the whole enterprise of translation undertaken by Arabized Christians in the Islamic West is more complex than has previously been supposed until now, as I have suggested elsewhere.

A general description of the Pentateuch text contained in Cod. Ar. 234

When he referred in 1909 to the two versions contained in Cod. Ar. 234, H. Goussen identified the Gospels as 'Arabic-Hispanic', whereas for the version of the Pentateuch he indicated that the 'fanatical Moor' (*fanatischer Maure*) who owned the two texts 'had to find it in other place.[31] The first scholar who really used Cod.

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gunos *hapax legomena*, *sententiae raras verbaque* en el Génesis del *Pentatvchvs Mosis Arabicè* de la "Escuela de Estudios Árabes' de Granada"', in C. Castillo, I. Cortés and J.P. Monferrer, eds, *Estudios Árabes. Dedicados a D. Luis Seco de Lucena (En el XXV Aniversario de su muerte)*, Granada, 1999, pp. 119-38.

[30] On the label 'Nestorian', see S.P. Brock, 'The "Nestorian" Church: a lamentable misnomer', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 78, 1996, pp. 23-35. On the term 'Chaldaic' for 'Nestorians', see J.-M. Fiey, 'Comment l'Occident en vint à parler de "Chaldéens"?', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 78, 1996, pp. 163-70.

[31] H. Goussen, *La literatura árabe cristiana de los mozárabes*, trans. from the German with selected bibliography, J.P. Monferrer-Sala, Córdoba, 1999, p. 27.

Ar. 234 was the tireless G. Graf, although I have not been able to obtain his article on the text.[32]

Graf was followed by A. Vööbus,[33] who noted the Targum elements in this Arabic version in order to support his theory about the dependence of the text of the Peshiṭtā on the old Palestinian Targums.[34] Apart from this, the only information that Vööbus provides about the text is the date of 1493 that appears, according to his numbering, on f. 77v.[35] P. van Koningsveld, believing that it was an Andalusian Christian text, classified it on the basis of the information in the colophon as a manuscript of North African provenance which circulated among Muslims.[36]

Certainly, the text did circulate among Muslims, as the note added in the colophon by a Muslim author indicates. Could this Muslim have himself copied the original manuscript of both Gospels and Pentateuch, which according to him was 'full of gaps and a great many mistakes' (*nuskhat al-kathīra al-khalal wa-al-ghalaṭ jiddan*), preserving some words and Syriac expressions that appeared? This seems to me unlikely due to the fact that such Syriac expressions would be completely incomprehensible to a Muslim reader. On the other hand, the idea that it was a text with 'gaps' and 'mistakes', in addition to the well-known 'contradictions' that Muslim authors found in the Old Testament and New Testament, was due to the fact that the text from this Pentateuch is not a literal version, but an Arabic version based upon the Syriac text of the Peshiṭtā, and incorporating Targumic elements, paraphrases from the LXX, and exegetical material from other sources.

According to what we have said above, before supposing or haz-

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[32] G. Graf, 'Die arabische Pentateuchübersetzung in cod. Monac. ar. 234', *Biblische Zeitschrift* 15, 1919-21, pp. 97-115, 193-212 and 291-300; idem, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, Vatican City, 1944 (repr. Modena, 1996), vol. I, p. 106.

[33] A. Vööbus, *Peschitta und Targumim des Pentateuchs: Neues Licht zur Frage der Herkunft der Peschitta aus den altpalästinischen Targum. Handschriftenstudien*, Stockholm, 1958, p. 59.

[34] On this subject, see the examples analysed in S.P. Brock, 'Jewish traditions in Syriac sources', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 30, 1979, pp. 212-32; idem, 'A Palestinian Targum feature in Syriac', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 46, 1995, pp. 271-82; and some instances are studied by J. Ribera Florit, 'Relación entre el Targum y las versiones antiguas: Los targumes de Jeremías y Ezequiel comparados con LXX, Peshitta y Vulgata', *Estudios Bíblicos* 52, 1994, pp. 317-28.

[35] Vööbus, *Peschitta und Targumim*, p. 59.

[36] P.S. van Koningsveld, 'Christian-Arabic manuscripts from the Iberian Peninsula', *Al-Qanṭara* 15, 1994, pp. 431-2.

arding that the manuscript was copied in Spain, shortly after the fall of Granada, we may now choose the North-African hypothesis, although accepting that the copy would arrive in Spain later, where it received marginal comments in Castillian and Arabic, both from the same hand, to which I shall refer below, and also the titles of the biblical books in Latin *aljamiado*[37] (thus, for example, *Janashīsh* and *Ash'ūdūsh*, the first of which wrongly does not join the *yā'* between the two letters *shīn*), and the Latin phrase in *aljamiado*: *qunfashī'ū janarālīsh*, which heads the short text of a confession of sins. Before offering some examples, let me provide a general description of the manuscript.

There is no general title

Incipit: *Al-ḥamdu li-llāh taʿālā wa-bi-llāh subḥānuhu al-tawfīq. Al-aṣḥāḥ al-awwal min al-sifr al-awwal min al-muṣḥaf al-awwal min al-Tawriyya. Awwal mā khalaqa Allāh al-samāwāt wa-al-arḍ* [...]

Explicit: *Wa-akmala kull al-yad al-ʿazīza maʿa kull al-manzar al-ʿazīm alladhīna ʿāyana Banū Isrā'īl min fiʿāl Mūsā.* [The colophon follows, and ends] *Tamma al-sifr al-khāmis min al-Tawriyya* [...] *wa-ṣallā Allāh ʿalā jamīʿ al-takyīn* (*sic*) *wa-al-mursilīn wa-sallama ʿalayhim taslīman kathīran ilā yawm al-dīn, amīn, amīn, amīn. Wa-al-ḥamdu li-llāh Rabb al-ʿālamīn.*

The text comprises 77 folios, each of 33 lines (with some exceptions), divided as follows: Genesis (1r-19r), Exodus (19r-34r) Leviticus (34v-46r), Numbers (46r-62v) and Deuteronomy (62v-77r). The text is written in black, with headings, demarcation of sections and verses and notes in another colour. (I am not able to specify this from the photocopy I have used).

Calligraphic type: Maghrebi *Naskhī* with features of developed Andalusian style.

Marginal notes: A great many marginal notes in Castillian from the same hand, and fewer in Arabic, with a hybrid writing style that combines courtly and humanistic with some influences from

[37] On the use of the 'Latin aljamiado', see A. Labarta, 'Oraciones cristianas aljamiadas en procesos inquisitoriales de moriscos valencianos', *Boletín de la Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona* 37, 1977-8, [pp. 177-97] p. 196; idem, 'Inventario de documentos árabes contenidos en procesos inquisitoriales contra moriscos valencianos conservados en el Archivo Histórico Nacional de Madrid (Legajos 548-56)', *Al-Qanṭara* 1, 1980, pp. 154-5. See also some quotations from a Psalter in 'Latin-Castillian aljamiado', in Hoenerbarch, *Spanisch-islamische Urkunden*, p. 298.

procedural, dating from the end of the fifteenth century and beginning of the sixteenth century. The author of the marginal notes uses abbreviations and links which are typical of these calligraphic styles and makes use of signs such as crosses and stars to mark texts, as well as special signs such as the 'manicula' (f. 6r) to draw attention to a particular passage.

Linguistic register: Classical Arabic with some interferences from Middle Arabic, where terms and Syriac expressions do not appear in *karshūnī*.

The folios of Cod. Ar. 234 are not numbered consecutively. Each of the two works within it has been numbered separately, with at least two later attempts after the time the manuscript was copied, but this work has not been completed. Consequently, I follow my own numbering. Folio 1r records in Latin the contents of the codex, its catalogue number, and the name of the person who owned it, the famous orientalist Johann Albrecht Widmanstadius:

Pentateuchus et Quattuor Euangelia
— Cod. Ar. 234 —
Jo. Alberti Wydmanstadiam ex st Zenijs, Sueui, cognomito Lucretij.

Folio 1v includes at the top a little cross-shaped sign followed by the abbreviation n° and the ordinal number 32, and is otherwise blank. Two last remarks: firstly, a brief note in Latin capital letters states that this text of the Torah is *IN SERMONE HEBREO*, though a later hand has crossed out the word *HEBREO* and *Arabico* has been substituted; secondly, a footnote in the same hand, though in Arabic, beneath this Latin note states incorrectly *hādhā sabʿa wa-asbaʿin*, that is to say: 'this is the *Septuagint*'. Obviously, the text from which the Arabic version has been made out is not that of the LXX, but a copy of the Peshiṭṭā, as I have pointed out above, and with an oriental, Nestorian provenence.

Examples[38]

The *Lectiones* from selected passages of Cod. Ar. 234 demonstrate that this version represents a direct translation from the Syriac text

[38] For a more detailed list with examples, see J.P. Monferrer-Sala, '¿Circularon textos cristianos orientales en al-Andalus? Nuevos datos a partir de una muestra véterotestamentaria andalusí', in M. Penelas *et al.*, eds, *¿Existe una identidad mozárabe? His-*

of the Peshiṭtā that includes, among others, paraphrastic elements which derive from the LXX and from the Targumic literature. It may have arrived in al-Andalus or North Africa at an early date, unless it was actually translated in al-Andalus; as we have stated above, for the moment we have no proof about either the arrival or the existence of versions of the Peshiṭtā in al-Andalus or among Christians in the North Africa.[39] It is also probable that this copy is the calligraphic adaptation of an earlier *karshūnī* text. However, the only firm evidence we have at present is that the text was copied in al-Andalus or North Africa. The handwriting makes this clear.

It is not easy to suppose that the text circulated among Muslims in the sixteenthth century, as van Koningsveld does, basing his view on the note that appears in f. 128r. Why would the Muslims make use of a text in Arabic, when the normal practice among them at this time was to preserve biblical fragments in *aljamiado*, and even Latin and Castilian? Indeed, *aljamiado* had become the main linguistic vehicle by this time within the Islamic community.

Syriac elements contained in the Pentateuch from Cod. Ar. 234[40]

Below, I provide some examples taken from the Book of Genesis, the Syriac substratum can be observed, followed by some brief explanations.[41]

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toria, lengua y cultura de los cristianos de al-Andalus (siglos IX-XII), Madrid, forthcoming.

[39] Two Karshūnī mss in El Escorial, an 'Apocalypse' and a treatise on Baptism, included in the *Codex* 1625 are of a later date, and they are written in sertō writing; cf. J.P. Monferrer-Sala, 'Un manuscrito *karshūnī* de la «Real Biblioteca de El Escorial»', *Collectanea Christiana Orientalia* 2, 2005, pp. 317-23.

[40] Hebrew texts come from R. Kittel *et al.*, *Tôrah Nᵉbî'îm u-Kᵉtûbîm. Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, Stuttgart, 1984² (henceforth *BHS*). For the Rabbinical material the abbreviations are as follows: *MidRab* (= *Midrash Rabbah*); *MidrTanh* (= *Midrash Tanḥuma*); *PesRKa* (= *Pesiqta d-Rab Kahana*) and *PRE* (*Pirqê Rabbî 'Eli'ezer*). For the Palestinian Targum we use the abbreviation *TN*; Targum Pseudo Jonatan is abbreviated as *TPsJ*.

[41] The Jewish North African Pentateuch edited by van Erpen is abbreviated as *ErPent*. The two texts edited by P. de Lagarde (*Materialien zur Kritik und Geschichte des Pentateuchs*, 2 vols, Leipzig, 1867), are abbreviated as Lagarde I and II. The version of al-Ḥārith b. Sinān b. Sunbāṭ, which is extant in a Codex in El Escorial is abbreviated as Esc. 1857. The quotations contained in al-Bājī's work, *'Alā al-Tawrāt: kitāb fī naqd al-Tawrāt al-yūnāniyya*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā, Cairo, 1400/1980) are referred to as al-Bājī.

Transcription of Syriac terms and expressions

Whereas many Eastern Christian manuscripts of the Bible make use of the Syriac alphabet in order to transcribe Arabic terms (*karshūnī*),[42] our manuscript does not use this system, so it is very difficult in some cases to identify clearly and accurately the Syriac dialectal variant which the Arabic version transliterates. In spite of this, we shall try to provide a hypothesis about the original text which was used for this Arabic version: the Syriac text of the Peshiṭtā.

Gen 6.2: *Banū Lūhīm* ('sons of God'). Transcription of the Syriac syntagma *'Elōhīm* (cf. *bᵉnê 'Elôhîm*),[43] where the construction *benay* has been replaced by the Arabic equivalent *banū*.[44] *ErPent* translates this and the occurrence in Gen 6.4 below as *awlād al-ashrāf* ('sons of the superiors'),[45] whereas Lagarde gives *banū Alūhīm* ('sons of God'),[46] with the same *lectio* appearing in Esc. 1857;[47] al-Bājī translates *Banū Allāh*.[48]

Gen 6.4: *Banī Lūhīm* ('sons of God'). Transcription, as in the previous case,[49] of the Syriac syntagma *benay 'Elōhīm* (cf. *bᵉnê 'Elôhîm*). Here, the construction *bᵉnay* is substituted by the Arabic in *casus obliquus*.

Gen 28.5: *Al-Ārāmī* ('the Aramaean'). Even though Arabic has a word

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[42] On the concept *karshūnī* and/or *ġarshūnī*, see A. Mingana, 'Garshuni or Karshuni', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 4, 1928, pp. 891-3; J. Assfalg, 'Arabische Handschriften in syrischer Schrift (Karshuni)', in W. Fischer and H. Gätje, eds, *Grundriss der arabischen Philologie*, Wiesbaden, 1982, vol. I, pp. 297-302 (a brief synthesis can be found in J. Assfalg, 'Karšūnī', in J. Assfalg and P. Krüger, *Petit dictionnaire de l'Orient chrétien*, Brepols, 1991, p. 280). For a particular use of the term in the sixteenth century, see H. Bobzin, 'Über eine bisher unbekannte europäische Bezeugung des Terminus 'karšūnī' im 16. Jahrhundert', *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 36, 1991, pp. 259-61.

[43] On the identification of 'sons of God' as 'fallen angels', see the study by M. Delcor, *Mito y tradición en la literatura apocalíptica*, Madrid, 1977, pp. 67-110.

[44] J. P. Monferrer-Sala, 'Gn 6,1-4 a la luz de un fragmento exegético contenido en el *Kitāb al-ta'rīj al-maǧmaʿ ʿalā l-taḥqīq wa-l-taṣdīq* de Eutiquio de Alejandría', *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos* 49, 2000, pp. 117-30. See also Ibn al-Ṭayyib, *Commentaire sur la Genèse*, 2 vols, ed. and trans. J.C. Sanders, Louvain, 1967, vol. I, p. 47 (Arabic text) (French translation in vol. II, p. 45). For the Rabbinical material, see P. Alexander, 'The Targumim and early exegesis of "sons of God' in Gen 6", *Journal of Jewish Studies* 23, 1972, pp. 60-71.

[45] Monferrer-Sala, 'Algunos *hapax legomena*', pp. 126-7.

[46] Lagarde, vol. I, p. 64.

[47] F. 35v.

[48] Al-Bājī, p. 40.

[49] Lagarde (vol. I, p. 64.) and Esc. 1857 f. 35v. Cf. Al-Bājī, p. 43: *Banū Allāh*.

for this, the text transcribes the Syriac term *'aramoyā* (cf. *ha-'arammî* = 'the Aramaean'). The Arabic alternative would have been *al-suryānī*, as in Esc. 1857,[50] *kaldānī* (with an archaic purpose). *ErPent* translates *al-armanī* ('the Armenian'), perhaps due to 'trivialization', and Lagarde agrees, although without the *alif* of the article (*l-armanī*).[51]

Gen 32.30b: *Banū Il* ('sons of God'). Transcription of the expression *banū 'Îl* (cf. *bᵉnê 'El*; and also Ps 29.1 and 89.7 *bᵉnê 'Elîm* = *bᵉnê 'Elôhîm*). This is not present in *ErPent* and Lagarde;[52] Esc. 1857 transcribes *fanuwīl*,[53] and al-Bājī gives the translation *wajh Allāh*.[54]

Gen 33.20b: *Īl Ilāh Isrā'īl* (*'Īl*, the God of Israel'). Transcription of the Syriac *'Il 'Alohā d-'Isrāyil* (cf. *'El 'Elôhê Yiśra'el*). *ErPent* transliterates *Il Iluhī Yisrā['i]l* (= *'El 'Elohē Yisrā['e]l*), and Lagarde and Esc. 1857 give *Ilāh Isrā'īl*.[55]

Ex 3.14a: *Ahyā ashār ahyā* ('I am who I am'). Transcription of the Syriac *'ahiyah 'ashrā 'ahiyah* (= *'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh*) identical to Lagarde: *ahyā ashār ahyā*.[56] Esc. 1857 does not transliterate the clause but interprets it as *al-Qadīm al-Azalī* ('The Eternal').[57]

Ex 3.14b: *Ahyā* ('I am'). Transcription of the Syriac *'ahiyah*. It is omitted in Lagarde;[58] Esc. 1857 interprets it as *Allāh al-Azalī* ('God, the Eternal', f. 144v).

Ex 15.22a: *Min baḥr sūf* ('from the sea of reeds'). Transcription of the Syriac prepositional syntagma *men yamā d-sūf* (cf. *miyyam-sûf*), with a similar reading in the Targums, where the preposition and the first term are translated, while the second term is transcribed as *sūf*. Lagarde gives *baḥr al-qulzum* ('the Red Sea'),[59] and Esc. 1857 *al-baḥr al-aḥmar* ('the Red Sea').[60]

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[50] F. 76v.
[51] Lagarde, vol. II, p. 31.
[52] Lagarde, vol. I, p. 163 and vol. II, p. 36.
[53] F. 89r.
[54] Al-Bājī, p. 82.
[55] Lagarde, vol. II, p. 38; this passage is not found in vol. I, p. 165 because chapters 33-4 are omitted; Esc. 1857, f. 90v.
[56] Lagarde, vol. II, p. 62.
[57] F. 144v. Cf. the free translation included in f. 133b: *anā alladhī lam yazal*.
[58] Lagarde, vol. II, p. 62.
[59] Lagarde, vol. II, p. 78.
[60] F. 170r.

Ex 24.10: *Ilāh Isrā'īl* ('the God of Israel'). Transcription of the Syriac syntagma *'Alohā d-'Isrāyil* (cf. *'Elôhê Yiśra'el*), with exactly the same *lectio* in Lagarde and Esc. 1857.[61]

Ex 24.10: *Safīr* ('sapphire'; probably 'lapis lazuli').[62] Even though Arabic contains this term, the translator has probably adapted it from the Syriac *safīlā* (cf. Hebrew *safīr*), which is related to the Sanskrit *çanipriya*.[63] Lagarde has *sabfīr*, which seems to be a printer's error,[64] and Esc. 1857 has *asmānjūn*, 'heavenly'.[65]

Units from the Peshiṭtā with Targumic influences

Gen 2.14: *Athūr* ('Assyria'). Transcription of the Syriac *'Atūr* (cf. *'Aththûr/'Athūr*) with a possible Targumic influence. Another reading in Lagarde,[66] which Esc. 1857 updates, makes it agree with 'Iraq'.[67]

Gen 35.27a: *Qūrā al-jabābira* ('the small villages of the giants'). Against the *lectio* of the Masoretic text (*qiryat ha-'Arbaʿ*, with a proposed reading of *qiryatah 'Arbaʿ*, 'the small village of the four'),[68] the Arabic follows the Targum *qertahôn d-gîborîya'*, 'the small village of the giants'[69] through the interpretation of the Peshiṭtā, *qūriyat gaburā* ('the small village of the giants'). Lagarde gives *qaryat al-jabābira*,[70] whereas Esc. 1857 interprets it as *madīnat al-buqʿa* ('the city of the place', i.e., the most important city in the region).[71]

Ex 17.6: *Al-ṭurān*^{bis} ('the mount/mountain'). Rather than a possible *pluralis fractus* of the Aramaic loan-word *ṭūr*,[72] the term is an ad-

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[61] Lagarde, vol. II, p. 88; Esc. 1857, f. 187r.

[62] F. Brown *et al.*, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic*, Peabody MA, 1979, p. 705.

[63] M. Ellenbogen, *Foreign Words in the Old Testament: Their Origin and Etymology*, London, 1962, p. 125.

[64] Lagarde, vol. II, p. 88.

[65] F. 187r.

[66] Lagarde, vol. I, p. 28; in vol. II, p. 3 the adaptation *arḍ al-Mawṣil* is included, as in al-Bājī, p. 30: *al-Mawṣil*.

[67] F. 29v.

[68] *BHS*, *apparatus ad locum*. On Hebron as *qiryat 'Arbaʿ*, see L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, Philadelphia, 1909-38, vol. V, p. 126, n. 137.

[69] *TN* Gn *ad locum*.

[70] Lagarde, vol. II, p. 40.

[71] F. 94v.

[72] *Ṭūr* is an Aramaic word (*ṭûr/ṭûra'*; Syr. *Ṭūrā*) that means 'mount', 'mountain'

aptation of the Syriac *ṭarunā* (cf. the Targumic Aramaic *ṭînnara'*[73] ('rock, mount, mountain'), which is a lengthening of the Aramaic *ṭūr*, Hebrew *ṣûr*). In this way, the expression '*alā ḥajar al-ṭirān bi-Ḥūrīb* represents the somewhat redundant translation of the Targumic Aramaic 'in the rock in Horeb'. Lagarde has '*alā al-ṣiwān/ṣawwān fī jabal Ḥūrīb*, 'in *al- ṣiwān/ṣawwān*, in Mount Horeb'),[74] where *al-ṣiwān/ṣawwān* must be a misreading of the term *al-ṭurān*. Esc. 1857 renders it perfectly as '*alā al-ṣakhra bi-Ḥūrīb* ('in the rock of Horeb').[75]

Exegetic equivalence

Gen 1.2: *Rīḥ Allāh* ('the roar of God') is an adaptation of the Syriac *ruḥā d-'Alohā* (cf. *ruaḥ 'Elôhîm*, 'the wind of God'). The translator has preferred the equivalent *rīḥ Allāh* instead of *rūḥ Allāh*, as *ErPent* gives, though under different exegetical influence.[76] Lagarde provides two different *lectiones*, *rūḥ Allāh* and *riyāḥ Allāh*,[77] and Esc. 1857 *rūḥ Allāh*.[78] In the *Commentary on the Diatessaron* attributed to Ephraem Syrus, the commentator has identified the *ruḥā* of Gen. 1.2 against other versions, as 'the Holy Spirit'.[79]

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and also 'countryside', see M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature. With an Index of Scriptural Quotations*, Jerusalem, 1959², vol. I, p. 526; M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period*, Ramat-Gan, 1992², p. 222; C. Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacum*, Hildesheim, 1995 (= Halis Saxonum, 1928²), p. 272; R. Payne Smith, ed., *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary, Founded upon the Thesaurus Syriacus of R. Payne Smith*, Oxford, 1903, p. 170. On the relationship in Arabic between *ṭūr* and *jabal*, see D. Künstlinger, 'Ṭūr und Gabal im Kurān', *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 5, 1927, pp. 58-67; K. Ahrens, *Muhammed als Religionsstifter*, Nendeln, 1966 (= Leipzig, 1935), p. 28, and A. Torres Fernández, '¿Gbl = 'monte' en el Antiguo Testamento?', *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos* 22, 1971, pp. 11-38, idem, 'Más sobre GBL = 'monte' en el Antiguo Testamento', *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos* 31, 1982, pp. 135-40.

[73] *TN* Ex *ad locum*.

[74] Lagarde, vol. II, p. 80.

[75] F. 173v.

[76] S. Stroumsa, 'The impact of Syriac tradition on early Judaeo-Arabic Bible exegesis', *Aram* 3, 1991, [pp. 83-96] p. 90; Monferrer-Sala, 'Algunos *hapax legomena*', pp. 124-5; cf. H. Orlinsky, 'The plain meaning of Ru^{ah} in Gen. 1.2', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 48, 1957-8, pp. 174-82.

[77] Lagarde, vol. I, p. 4 and vol. II, p. 2.

[78] F. 26v.

[79] C. Lange, 'A view on the integrity of the Syriac commentary on the Diatessaron', in R. Ebied and H. Teule, eds, *Symposium Syriacum VIII (The University of Sydney, 26 June–1 July 2000)*, *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 56, 2004, [pp. 129-44] pp. 133-4.

Textual variants of the Arabic version with regard to the Peshiṭtā text

Gen 6.4: *Banāt Qā'in* ('Cain's daughters'). Unlike the Syriac text, which gives *bᵉnot noshā* ('men's daughters';[80] cf. *bᵉnôṯ ha-'adam*, 'men's daughters'), the Arabic version partially avoids the Syriac translation and follows a Midrashic tradition on the term *'adam* that designates Cain's lineage in some traditions[81] (an identification that does not appear in the Old Testament, cf. the genealogy of Cain in Gen 4.17-26),[82] though following different developments in Rabbinic and Christian literature.[83] Esc. 1857 reads *banāt al-nās* ('people's daughters = men's daughters'), as does al-Bājī,[84] and Lagarde renders *banāt al-'āmma*, 'daughters of common people').[85]

Gen 32.30b: *Innī 'āyantu al-malak muwājahatan banū Īl* ('because I have seen the angel face to face, the sons of God'), unlike the Peshiṭtā that follows the Masoretic text, except for the variant *malākā*.

The Masoretic text gives the reading *kî-ra'îtî 'Elôhîm panîm 'el-panîm* ('because I have seen God face to face'), which is translated literally in the Peshiṭtā. However, the *lectio* given by our Pentateuch contains Midrashic and Haggadic elements[86] that attempt to avoid the divine anthropomorphisation which interpretation of the text makes possible.[87] But judging by the inclusion of the term *al-malak* (< *malākā*) and the transcription *Banū Il* in the same sentence, perhaps two different traditions have been combined.[88] *ErPent* renders the sentence *li-anna ra'aytu malā'ikat Allāh wajh bi-wajh* ('because I have

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[80] Cf. the interpretation attributed to Ephraem in the 'Armenian Commentary': E.G. Mathews, 'The Armenian Commentary on Genesis attributed to Ephrem the Syrian', in J. Frishman and L. van Rompay, eds, *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation: A Collection of Essays*, Louvain, 1997, [pp. 143-61] p. 147; cf. A. Salvesen, 'Hexaplaric readings in Išo'dad of Merv's Commentary on Genesis', in Frishman and van Rompay, *Book of Genesis*, [pp. 229-52] p. 251.

[81] *TPsJ* 6,2 and *PRE*, 22,2. For its Christian reception, see D. Kruisheer, 'Reconstructing Jacob of Edessa's *Scholia*', in Frishman and van Rompay, *Book of Genesis*, [pp. 187-96] pp. 195-6.

[82] J. Gabriel, 'Die Kainitengenealogie', *Biblica* 40, 1959, pp. 409-27.

[83] Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, vol. I, pp. 124-7; vol. V, pp. 153-6, n. 57, and the Book of Jubilees 5.1-2.

[84] Al-Bājī, p. 43.

[85] Lagarde, vol. II, p. 7.

[86] *MidrR* Gn, 78.3-4, *MidrTan* 8.22 (*wayyishellâ*), *PesRKah*, S1,II; *PRE* 35.3 and 37.2. See also Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, vol. I, pp. 384-8.

[87] J. Schildenberger, 'Jakobs nächtlicher Kampf mit dem Elohim am Jakob (Gn 32,23-30)', in *Miscellanea biblica B. Ubach*, Barcelona, 1953, pp. 69-96.

[88] Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, vol. I, p. 384 *in fine*.

seen the angels of God face to face'). Lagarde reproduces the variant *al-malāk*, but like *Erpent* agrees with the reading of the Peshiṭtā and Masoretic text: *innani al-malāk wajh li-wajh ra'aytu* ('because I have seen the angel face to face').[89] Esc. 1857 reads *min ajl innī ra'aytu al-malāk muwājahatan* ('because I have seen the angel face to face').[90] Al-Bājī, for his part, gives: *li-annī ra'aytu al-Ilāh wajh li-wajh*.[91]

Explanatory glosses of toponyms

Gen 2.14: *Athūr allatī huwa al-Mawṣil* ('Assyria, which is Mosul'). *Allatī huwa al-Mawṣil* is an explanatory gloss of the term *Athūr*, which is a transcription of the Aramaic *'atûr/'athûr* (Syriac *'athūr*) that renders the Hebrew *'Ashûr*, a term used in Antiquity for Assyria. The use of the toponym *al-Mawṣil*[92] derives from the desire to locate the biblical *Athūr* precisely in northern Mesopotamia. This gloss is not included in the Peshiṭtā. In Lagarde's edition, as we have noted above, the reading *arḍ al-Mawṣil* ('land of Mosul') is given, although this is not an explanatory gloss but an adaptation of the original toponym[93] that coincides geographically with the information provided by the exegetical material gathered in Lagarde's edition, vol. I.[94] By the way, this information agrees with the adaptation contained in Esc. 1857: *al-ʿIrāq*.[95]

Gen 35.27: *Allatī bi-arḍ Kanʿān* ('which is in the land of Canaan'). An explanatory gloss which is also contained in the Peshiṭtā (*d-b^{e}-'arʿā d-K^{e}naʿan*, 'which is in the land of Canaan') to locate the toponym Hebron (*Ḥībrūn*),[96] the town variously called *Ḥabrūn* and *al-Khalīl*.[97] The *lectio* offered by our Pentateuch is similar to the one included in Lagarde's edition,[98] and the same as the one included in Esc. 1857, although without the relative: *bi-arḍ Kanʿān* ('in the land of Canaan').[99]

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89 Lagarde, vol. II, p. 37; cf. vol. I, p. 163
90 F. 89r.
91 Al-Bājī, p. 82.
92 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, Beirut, 1399/1979, vol. V, pp. 223-5.
93 Lagarde, vol. II, p. 3.
94 Lagarde, vol. I, pp. 27-8.
95 F. 29v.
96 On Hebron and adjacent cities, see G.A. Smith, *Geografía histórica de la Tierra Santa*, Spanish trans. by L. Briones, Valencia, 1985, pp. 171-9.
97 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, vol. II, pp. 212-13.
98 Lagarde, vol. II, p. 40.
99 F. 94v.

Equivalences of divine names

The Syriac-Arabic equivalences of divine names naturally depend on the original term used in the base text, as these have been employed by the authors of these texts.[100] Ex. 20.23a (where *āliha* renders *'alohē*, cf. *'Elôhîm*) is not included in the following summary, because it does not refer to the God of Israel but to the pagan gods. *Al-Rabb* in Gen. 32.29 is also excluded, because it is the translator's addition, and does not appear in the Syriac text.

Allāh ('[the] God') < Syr. *'Alohā* (< *'Elôhîm*) (Gen 1.1, 2; 9.27; 21.2; 28.4; 31.24; 35.15; cf. *Allāh* < Syr. *Moryā* (< *Yahweh*), Ex 9.3, 8).

Al-Rabb ('the Lord') < Syr. *Moryā* (< *Yahweh*) (Gen 10.9^{bis}; cf. Ex 3.2; 9.5, 6; 12.11b; 15.1; 24.17; cf. *al-Rabb* < Syr. *'Alohā* (< *'Elôhîm*), Ex 24.11). *ErPent* has *Allāh*.

Allāh al-Rabb ('God, the Lord') < Syr. *Moryā 'Alohā* (< *Yahweh 'Elôhîm*) (Gen 2.15; 3.23a]. Cf. the redundant *Allāh al-ilāh* in *ErPent*, and also *Allāh al-Rabb* < Syr. *Moryā 'Alohā* (< *Yahweh 'Elôhê*) (Gen 9.26).

Al-Rabb Ilāhuka ('the Lord, your God') < Syr. *Moryā* (< *Yahweh*) (Gen 15.7). *ErPent* has *Allāh*.

Allāhumma Rabbī ('By God, my Lord') < Syr. *Moryā 'Aloha* (*'Adônay Yahweh*) (Gen 15.8). Cf. *ErPent*: *Allāh al-Ilāh*.

The semantic equivalence of the words *Allāh* and *al-Rabb* for translating both terms *'Alohā* and *Moryā* (which both render the *Tetragrammaton* and the plural of majesty *'Elôhîm* [sing. *'El*, related to Aramaic and Arabic *ilāh*]—the singular form *'Elôah* is only attested in post-exilic texts) is a choice that can be defined as correct in every case, because, as I have stated, the use of several names in the different fragments of the Syriac text is an attempt to systematize the variants used by the writer in the original Hebrew text or in the LXX.

In cases of compound names, the use of *al-Rabb Ilāhuka* represents an attempt by the translator to put into Syriac *Moryā* (< *Yahweh*), which is the name that appears in the Syriac text. Similarly, the pair *Allāh al-Rabb* translates by inversion the Syriac *Moryā 'Alohā*,

[100] M.H. Segal, 'The composition of the Pentateuch; a fresh examination', in *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, vol. VIII, *Studies in the Bible*, ed. C. Rabin, Jerusalem, 1961, pp. 68-114.

that renders the Jewish reading of the Hebrew *Yahweh ʾElôhîm/ʾElôhê*, reading *ʾAdonay ʾElôhîm/ʾElôhê* in the way that Jews did and still do. The case of *Allāhumma Rabbī*, with inversion of the terms in the Syriac rendering of the original Hebrew *ʾAdonay Yahweh*, translates *Moryā ʾAlohā*. Lastly, of interest in itself, the choice of *Ilāh Isrāʾīl* (Ex 24.10) to render the Syriac *ʾAlohā d-ʾIsrāyil* (< *ʾElôhîm Yiśraʾel*) involving the use of the singular *Ilāh* to translate *Moryā*, shows the translator is concerned to avoid a plural of majesty, but nevertheless indicates the difference in the original by employing an alternative to the more usual *Allāh* and *al-Rabb*.

BIBLICAL ALLUSIONS AND CITATIONS IN THE SYRIAC *THEOTOKIA* ACCORDING TO THE MS SYR. NEW SERIES 11 OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF RUSSIA, ST PETERSBURG

NATALIA SMELOVA[1]

The *Theotokion* (Gr. θεοτοκίον, plur. θεοτοκία) is a short hymn dedicated to the Mother of God (Gr. Θεοτόκος). It is one of the most ancient hymnographical forms, attested in papyri from the fourth century.[2] From the eighth century onwards the *Theotokia* were usually placed in the liturgical books of the Greek Church side by side with the odes of canons, *stichera* (versicles) and *kathismata* ('sitting hymns'), the hymns sung during Vespers and Matins after a verse of a psalm or after a canticle. Some time later, Greek *Theotokia* were translated into other languages—Syriac, Arabic, Slavonic—for liturgical use in other Chalcedonian churches.

It is well known that the term *Theotokia* is also used in the Coptic tradition to designate the daily service in praise of the Virgin Mary. The Coptic *Theotokia* are considered to be original hymns composed in the Bohairic dialect following the model of Greek hymnography and later translated into Arabic. Their texts have survived in numerous manuscripts from the fourteenth century onwards.[3] It is to the Coptic *Theotokia* that the Ethiopian service of the *Weddāsē Mariam*, praise to the Virgin Mary, goes back.

In the Syriac tradition the term *Theotokia* is not very widely used.

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[1] I am grateful to Prof. Elena Nikitichna Mescherskaya of the University of St Petersburg and Dr Mary Cunningham of the University of Birmingham for reading the article and making valuable suggestions, and to my husband Dr Nikolai Lipatov for his great help in preparing the English translation of the article.

[2] A. Baumstark, 'Ein frühchristliches Theotokion in mehrsprachiger Überlieferung und verwandte Texte des ambrosianischen Ritus' *Oriens Christianus*, Neue Serie 7-8, 1918, pp. 37-61; D.M. Montagna, 'La lode alla Theotokos nei testi greci dei secoli IV-VII', *Marianum* 81, 1962, pp. 453-543.

[3] A. Mallon, 'Les théotokies ou office de la Sainte Vierge dans le rite Copte', *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 9, 1904, pp. 17-31; De Lacy O'Leary, *The Coptic Theotokia*, London, 1923; Y.N. Youssef, 'Une relecture des Theotokies coptes', *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 36, 1997, pp. 157-70.

The transcription *t'wṭqy* of the Greek θεοτοκία was in use in the Syriac-speaking Melkite milieu and applied to the liturgical hymns to the Mother of God (which were undoubtedly translated from Greek), while Jacobites preferred to translate it as *dyldt 'lh'* to designate hymns to the Virgin Mary. The term is also applied to Melkite collections of hymns to the Virgin. One of the few examples of such a collection may be found in the Catalogue of the Syriac fragments discovered in 1975 in the monastery of St Catherine on Mt Sinai, published by Sebastian Brock. These include a few separate bifolia from the ninth to the eleventh centuries containing hymns to the Virgin (Sp. 68, 69, 70) which Brock characterises as *Theotokia*.[4]

The only known independent and quite full collection of Syriac *Theotokia* is kept in the National Library of Russia in St Petersburg (Syriac New Series, 11). This is a parchment manuscript of 15 folios, the text of which was studied and translated into French in the 1920s by the Russian expert in the field of Syriac studies, Nina Viktorovna Pigulevskaya. But the translation has never been published, and the typescript of it is available only from the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St Petersburg. In its short description in the Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts of Leningrad of 1960, the manuscript is called the Syriac *Akathistos* to the Virgin Mary and is dated from the tenth or eleventh century.[5]

There is no direct evidence of manuscript's origin. According to archival accounts, it was acquired in 1859 from the collection of C. Tischendorf who we know from his own account intended in his expedition of 1859 to acquire Greek and oriental manuscripts in the monasteries of the Middle East, and primarily to negotiate about *Codex Sinaiticus*, the celebrated early Greek manuscript of the Bible at the Monastery of St Catherine. As a result of his expedition, Tischendorf brought to St Petersburg both *Codex Sinaiticus* (which is now held in the British Library) and a collection of precious Greek and oriental manuscripts, among which there was a manuscript of the Syriac *Theotokia*. It is highly probable that this manuscript was also produced at St Catherine's, and its Melkite character is circumstantial evidence for this.

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[4] S.P. Brock, *Catalogue of Syriac Fragments (New Finds) in the Library of the Monastery of Saint Catherine, Mount Sinai*, Athens, 1995, pp. 66-7, 268-71.

[5] N.V. Pigulevskaya, *Katalog syriyskih rukopisei Leningrada* (*Palestinskiy Sbornik* 6/69), Leningrad, 1960, p. 152.

From the time of its foundation, the monastery was a stronghold of Chalcedonianism and became a major centre of Christian book culture: in its library were concentrated numerous manuscripts of the Bible, homiletics, hagiography and hymnography from the Melkite monasteries of the Near East, mainly Syria and Palestine. At present, the library contains more than 5,000 volumes in twelve different languages, including Greek, Syriac, Arabic, Georgian and Slavonic.[6]

The St Petersburg manuscript of the *Theotokia* is undoubtedly of Melkite origin, which is demonstrated by its palaeographical characteristics and its contents. One can find in it numerous Christological formulas defining the unity of the divine and human natures in Christ against the Nestorians and the Monophysites. It is written in a well-defined Melkite hand using black ink and cinnabar for headings. The text has no vocalisation; diacritical points are used to indicate plurals and pronouns. The total number of folios is fifteen. Codicological analysis and examination of flesh- and hair-surfaces of the parchment have revealed two separate quaternions, the second of which lacks the last leaf.

The text begins with the words *ktbynn t'wtwqy* (f. 1v), 'We write *Theotokia*'. It contains at least 51 readable hymns to the Virgin Mary, divided into eight general parts entitled *ql'* ('voices', 'sounds'), which here means 'modes'. Each mode consists of a different number of strophes, from five to nine. This indicates that the text has an obvious octonary structure, which suggests a relation with the Byzantine *Octoechos*. The Greek Ὀκτώηχος literally means 'eight voices', but in fact it has three meanings (according to Aelred Cody) that should be distinguished carefully: the musical system of eight modes, hymnographic texts arranged in eight sets according to the eight-week cycles within the ecclesiastical year (the arrangement of which is attributed to St John of Damascus in the eighth century), and finally a book containing texts arranged in eight sets.[7]

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[6] See M. Kamil, *Catalogue of All Manuscripts in the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai*, Wiesbaden, 1970.

[7] A. Cody, 'The early history of the octoechos in Syria', in N. Garsoian, ed., *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*, Washington DC, 1982, [pp. 89-113] p. 89; E. Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, Oxford, 1961 (repr. 1998), pp. 44, 69-71.

The text in our manuscript appears to follow the structure of the hymnographic *Octoechos*. At the same time it represents a kind of liturgical book—a separate collection of eight sets of hymns to the Virgin, which is probably a special type of the *Octoechos*. The liturgical pieces were translated from the original Greek (which is clear from their syntactical and lexical structure) into Syriac at some stage.

The *Theotokia* arranged in eight modes along with *stichera* and *kathismata* usually constitute a part of the book of the *Octoechos*. The earliest known manuscript of the *Octoechos*, which contains extensive sets of the *Theotokia* divided into eight modes, is a Greek manuscript kept in St Catherine's Monastery (Sin. Gr. 1593). It originates from a Melkite milieu in Palestine (probably from the Great Lavra of St Sabas) and can be dated to the late eighth or early ninth century on the basis of its palaeographical features. This manuscript contains the Greek texts which are the archetypes for most of the Syriac hymns in the St Petersburg manuscript. Similar sets of hymns to the Virgin can be found in more recent Greek manuscripts of the *Octoechos* dating from the tenth century onwards, also kept in St Catherine's Monastery (for example Sin. Gr. 778).

Selected Greek *Theotokia* can be found in the various editions of the *Parakletike*, the Great *Octoechos* containing hymns for every day of the week, which continue in liturgical use in the Greek Church to the present.[8] The most complete scholarly edition of the texts contained in the *Octoechos*, with music scores transcribed from the so-called Codex Dalasseni and other Greek liturgical manuscripts, was produced in 1940 and 1949 by H. Tillyard as part of the *Monumenta Musicae Byzantinae* Project.[9]

As for the Syriac translation of *Theotokia*, I would like to offer an outline of its history based on the recent study of manuscripts. The earliest Syriac translation is found in the above-mentioned newly discovered Sinai fragment published by Brock (Syriac Sp. 68), which is dated on the grounds of its script to the ninth century.[10] I can-

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[8] The most reliable edition, based upon a great number of manuscripts, is Παραλητική ἤτοι Οκτώηχος ἥ Μεγάλη, Rome, 1885. I have used this edition along with the most recent one: Παραλητική ἤτοι Οκτώηχος ἥ Μεγάλη, Athens, 2003.

[9] *The Hymns of the Octoechus*, transcribed by H.J.W. Tillyard (*Monumenta Musica Byzantinae*, *Transcripta* 3 and 5), Copenhagen, part 1, 1940, part 2, 1949.

[10] Brock, *Catalogue of Syriac Fragments*, pp. 66, 268-9.

not yet say to which liturgical book this bifolium might belong, but there are two strophes in this fragment that I have managed to identify as *Theotokia* in the first mode, the text of which corresponds almost entirely to that of the St Petersburg manuscript with a few insignificant variants.

St Petersburg manuscript Syriac New Series 11, the only separate and almost complete collection of Syriac hymns to the Mother of God, can also be assigned to the same stage of development of the Syriac text of the *Theotokia*. There are no attested parallels to this phenomenon in the Greek tradition. As I have already stated, it has previously been tentatively assigned to the tenth or eleventh century, though in my judgment, palaeographic features suggest an earlier dating, probably the ninth century. This conclusion has been supported by Brock and A. Desreumaux, specialists in Syriac palaeography. Although the possibility that the present collection of hymns formed an attachment to another liturgical book (*Menaia*, *Heirmologion* or *Psalter*) cannot be completely excluded, the codicological structure of the St Petersburg manuscript—two well-defined quaternions—is more characteristic of a separate manuscript. Thus one can postulate the *terminus ante quem* for the Syriac translation of the *Theotokia* as the ninth century. It is difficult to locate the translation, but taking into consideration the provenance of the fragments and the St Petersburg manuscript, I suggest that it might be linked with the local tradition at St Catherine's Monastery.

From the eleventh century on, Syriac translations of the whole book of *Octoechos* containing *Theotokia* along with other numerous hymnographical pieces can be found. I tend to identify the appearance of the complete Syriac *Octoechoi* as the next stage of Melkite translation activity. A great number of such manuscripts dating from approximately the eleventh to the sixteenth century, are to be found in various collections, in particular in the British Library (Add. 14508, Add. 17133, Add. 14710, Add. 17240), St Catherine's Monastery (Sin. Syr. 25, Sin. Syr. 208, Sin. Syr. 210), the Bodleian Library, and the University of Birmingham Library (Mingana Collection). Examination of the text of these items reveals the same translation of the *Theotokia* as that preserved in the St Petersburg collection.

The next stage in the history of the *Theotokia* is marked by evidence of penetration of Melkite Greek and Syriac texts into the West Syrian tradition. It is represented by *tkšpṭ* ('supplications'), also divided

into eight modes attested in West Syrian collections of hymns (*byt gz'*) dating from the beginning of the eleventh century. The earliest manuscripts containing *tkšpṭ' dyldt 'lh'* ('supplications to the Mother of God') are kept in the Vatican Library (Vat. Syr. 94, between 1010 and 1033 AD) and in the British Library (Add. 14714, 1074-5 AD).[11] In some more recent manuscripts these hymns are attributed to Rabbula, Bishop of Edessa (d. 435)[12] and even to Ephrem the Syrian (d. 373) (in the mid-fourteenth century manuscript in the Mingana Collection, Mingana 372). Among West Syrian hymns dedicated to the Virgin there are some texts having the same Greek archetype as Melkite *Theotokia* in the St Petersburg manuscript. Scholars such as H. Hussman and A. Cody have noted that the Jacobite liturgical tradition was influenced by Melkite liturgy and Greek humnography.[13] The evidence for this is Melkite *Theotokia* transformed into Jacobite *tkspt'*.

This is a short outline of the textual history of the *Theotokia* which can be traced from the late eighth century onwards on the basis of various manuscripts. The fact of borrowing of the Melkite texts in Jacobite circles testifies to the close links between Orthodox and Monophysite communities (usually thought to be hostile towards one another) in the Near East in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

Being a pure product of Byzantine hymnography, the *Theotokia* contain numerous supplications to the Virgin as *yldt 'lh'* (Θεοτόκος), Mother of God. They also contain Christological statements about the unity of two natures in Christ without conjunction, his birth and Incarnation, which became the dogmas of the Orthodox Church. That is why some of the *Theotokia* are called *Theotokia dogmatica.*[14]

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[11] I studied the manuscripts during research fellowships in Rome and London kindly offered to me by the French School in Rome (2003) and the Warburg Institute, London (2004-5). I completed a comparative study of the manuscripts based upon copies and microfilms held there.

[12] Brit. Lib. Add. 17238, cf. J. Overbeck. *S. Ephraemi Syri, Rabulae Episcopi Edesseni, Balaei aliorumque opera selecta*, Oxford, 1865, pp. 245–6; Bibl. Medicea Laurenziana Cod. Orientalis 308 (XL), fol. 32v, cf. S.E. Assemani. *Bibliothecae Mediceae Laurenzianae et Palatinae codicum MSS Orientalium Catalogus*, Florence, 1742, p. 78.

[13] H. Husmann, 'Die melkitische Liturgie als Quelle der syrischen Qanune iaonaie (Melitene und Edessa)', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 41, 1975, pp. 5–56; idem, 'Syrischer und Byzantinischer Oktoëchos. Kanones und Qanune', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 44, 1978, pp. 65–73; Cody, 'History of the Octoechos', pp. 97–9.

[14] A great number of the *stichera dogmatica* are published in Tillyard, *Hymns of the Octoechus*, part 2, pp. 103-62.

As the liturgical aim of the *Theotokia* is to accompany the verses of Psalms or Old Testament canticles, it is natural that they contain numerous allusions to the Bible. It is well-known that many Old Testament prophecies were applied to the Virgin Mary by early Christian writers and hymnographers.[15] This typology may be observed from the second century when Justin Martyr (c. 100–c. 165) and Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 130–c. 202) saw the Old Testament figure of Eve as a type of the Mother of God, whose obedience was opposed to Eve's disobedience. This type, as well as many other types of the Virgin Mary, can be found in the hymns of St Ephrem the Syrian who became a forefather of Syriac hymnography[16] and in the homilies of St Proclus of Constantinople (d. 446),[17] who together with St Romanus influenced later preachers and hymnographers such as St Andrew of Crete (c. 660–740), St Germanus of Constantinople (d. 730 or 742) and St John of Damascus.[18] A great number of *Theotokia* of the *Octoechos*, in particular the abovementioned *Theotokia dogmatica*, are attributed to St John, who made the most considerable contribution to Byzantine Mariology.

Clear evidence of a well-elaborated typology of the Virgin Mary is presented by the Syriac *Theotokia* containing a large number of Biblical allusions. I offer short survey of these below.[19]

The first *Theotokion* of the first mode which is preserved in the

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[15] See M. Cunningham, 'The meeting of the old and the new: the typology of Mary the Theotokos in Byzantine homilies and hymns', *Studies in Church History* 39, 2004, pp. 52-62; E. Lash, 'Mary in Eastern Church literature', in A. Stacpoole, ed., *Mary in Doctrine and Devotion*, Dublin, 1990, pp. 58-80; G.R. Woodward, *The Most Holy Mother of God in the Songs of the Eastern Church*, London, 1919.

[16] S.P. Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem*, Rome, 1985 (repr. Kalamazoo MI, 1992); idem, *The Bride of Light: Hymns of Mary from the Syriac Churches*, Baker Hill, Kottayam, 1994.

[17] N. Constas, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity*, Leiden, 2003; *Proclus, Bishop of Constantinople: Homilies on the Life of Christ*, trans. J. H. Barkhuizen, Brisbane, 2001.

[18] See *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies*, trans. B.E. Daley, Crestwood NY, 1998.

[19] For the Peshiṭtā translation of the Old Testament I used the edition of the Leiden Peshitta Institute: *The Old Testament in Syriac According to the Peshiṭtā Version*, Leiden, 1977- (*OTP*); for the Peshiṭtā translation of both New and Old Testaments I used ܟܬܒܐ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܬܪܥܝܢ ܩܝܡܐ ܘܥܬܝܩܐ ܕܟܠ, London, 1979 (repr. 1999). For the Septuagint I used *Septuaginta id est Vetus Testamentum Graece iuxta LXX interpretes*, ed. A. Rahlfs, 8th edn, Stuttgart, 1965; and for the Greek New Testament, *The Greek New Testament,* ed. B. Aland et al., 4th rev. edn, London, 1998.

St Petersburg manuscript contains two epithets of the Virgin. One of them, 'the unquenchable lamp', is most probably an allusion to the commands to Moses in Ex 25.31ff. and especially in Ex 27.20: '...to bring...pure oil of beaten olives for the light, so that a lamp may be set up to burn regularly'.[20] The word used for 'lamp' in the Peshiṭtā is *šrg'* while in our text it is *lmpyd'*, Syriac transcription of Greek λαμπάς, which became usual for the Syriac language. In the Septuagint the word 'lamp' is invariably translated as λύχνος rather than λαμπάς. In the New Testament Peshiṭtā the word *lmpyd'* is preferred,[21] just like λαμπάς in the Greek New Testament.

In *Theotokion* 1 of the first mode and *Theotokion* 21 of the fourth mode the Virgin Mary is called 'the temple glorified' and 'the animated temple' respectively. This must be an allusion to Ps 11.4: 'The Lord is in his holy temple'.[22] Although the word *hykl'* is used in both the Peshiṭtā and the *Theotokia*, this epithet cannot be considered a full quotation.

Some of the *Theotokia* represent small collections of Old Testament prophecies, such as for example *Theotokion* 2 of the first mode, which can be found in the St Petersburg manuscript as well as in Sinai fragment 68,[23] and also in the manuscripts of the Jacobite *byt gz'* of which the earliest is Vat. Syr. 94.[24]

The first type here, 'the ark', which can also be found in *Theotokion* 23, must be an allusion to various Old Testament texts: Ex 25, 26, 37, 40; Num 1, 2, 10; Ps 132.8 etc. The same Syriac word for 'ark', *qbwt'*, is used both in the Peshiṭtā and in the *Theotokia*.

The same *Theotokion* contains a citation from Is. 11.1: '... the rod came forth and a branch grew out of the root of Jesse…', in which the vocabulary and phraseology are based upon the Peshiṭtā, even when the structure of the phrase is different.[25]

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[20] Ex 27.20: ܕܢܗܪܐ ܕܬܡܝܕ ܠܡܩܕ . *OTP*, part 1, fasc. 1, p. 181; Lev 24.2: ܠܡܢܗܪ ܕܬܡܝܕ ܠܡܩܕ . *OTP*, part 1, fasc. 2, pp. 63-4. See also Ex 25.37 f., 37.17 f., 40.24 f., Num 8.2 f. etc.

[21] See W. Jennings, *Lexicon to the Syriac New Testament (Peshiṭtā)*, Oxford, 1926. Matt 25.1-8: ܕܢܦܩܘ ܠܩܪܝܬ ܒܥܠܬܗ ܕܢܣܒܪ ܠܟܠܐ ܕܢܫܪܝ ܠܗ ܒܫܪܓ ܕܢܗܪ ܠܗ ܒܫܪܓ etc.; John 18.3: ܘܐܬܐ ܝܗܘܕܐ ܠܗ ܠܫܪܓ ܕܢܗܪ

[22] Ps 11.4: ܡܪܝܐ ܒܗܝܟܠ ܩܕܫܗ *OTP*, part 2, fasc. 3, p. 10.

[23] Brock, *Catalogue of Syriac Fragments*, pp. 268-9 (facsimile).

[24] Vat. Syr. 94, f. 156v.

[25] *Theotokion* 2 (NLR Syr. New Series 11, f. 1v): ܕ ܩܒܠ ܒܬܘܠܬܐ ܢܩܝܐ ܡܢ ܥܡ ܩܒܪܐ ܕܒܬܘܠܬܐ ܩܒܠ ܒܥܠ ܒܬܘܠ Is 11.1: ܘܢܦܩ ܚܘܪܨܐ ܡܢ ܓܙܥ ܝܫܝ ܘܦܪܚ ܡܢ ܫܪܫܗ *OTP*, part 3, fasc. 1, p. 20.

The expression, *ṭwr' mtyd'n'* (traditionally interpreted as 'spiritual mountain') is an allusion to Dan 2.34-5 as well as to Ps 14.1, 23.3 and 67.16-17.[26] Here and elsewhere in the Peshiṭtā we do not find the epithet *mtyd'n'*, 'spiritual', 'reasonable', which is obviously a product of later hymnography. This allusion is also contained in *Theotokion* 3 of the first mode, *Theotokion* 48 of the eighth mode and also in *Theotokion* 36 of the sixth mode, which contains a Christological interpretation of Dan. 2.34-5: 'Who but you in the old days have been shown symbolically by Daniel, when from your mountain, pure one, the stone has been hewn, which is Christ, our God.'[27]

Returning to the remarkable *Theotokion* 2, we find the type of 'the shut door' which belongs to the prophecy of Ezekiel (Ez. 44.1-2): 'This gate shall remain shut…'.[28] The Syriac words *tr'' 'hyd'* (shut door), used in *Theotokia* 2 and 9, correspond to the Peshiṭtā translation.

The *Theotokion* is concluded by the passage: 'For the great sun of righteousness, the Christ, rose from you and enlightened the believers...',[29] which is an allusion to Malachi 4.2: 'But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise...' [30] Key words of the phrase in Syriac correspond fully to the Peshiṭtā.

Theotokion 3 of the first mode preserved in the St Petersburg manuscript, as well as in Sinai fragment 68, contains a paraphrase of the narrative about God's descent upon Mt Sinai (Ex 19.16-20):

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[26] Dan 2.34-5: ܕܚܙܝܐ ... (35) ... ܕܐܬܚܙܝ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܡܢܛܪ ܠܐ ܒܐܝܕ ܫܪܝܪ ܕܐܬܚܙܝ ܒܝܪ ܛܘܪ ܛܒ ܡܠܬܐ. ܕܐܝ ܡܝܠܐ ܗܘ ܕܐܬܚܙܝ ܡܫܝܚܐ OTP, p. III, fasc. 4, 1980, p. 5; Dan 2.45:ܡܢܛܪ ܠܐ ܒܐܝܕ ܫܪܝܪ ܒܝܪ ܡܝܠܐ ܕܝ *OTP*, part 3, fasc. 4, p. 6; Ps 15.1: ܡܟܬܡ ܡܝܠܝ ܢܨܐ ܥܡ ܕܝ *OTP*, part 2, fasc. 3, p. 12; Ps 24.3: ܟܠ ܡܢ ܕܐܬܚܙܝ ܡܝܠܝ ܟܠ ܡܢ ܕܐܬ. ܐܝܟܐ ܡܝܠܐ *OTP*, part 2, fasc. 3, p. 24; Ps 68.16-17:(16) ܓܒܠܐ ܕܝ ܐܠܗ (17) ܪܟܒ ܢܝܠܐ. ܪܟܒ ܢܝܠܐ ܪܟܒ ܢܝܠܐ. ܥܠܝ ܢܝܠܐ ܕܐ ܢܨܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐ. ܟܕ ܐܬܠ ܥܠܝ ܢܝܠܐ ܕܐ ܢܨܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐ. ܐܝܠܐ ܪܟܒ ܢܝܠܐ *OTP*, part 2, fasc. 3, pp. 73-4; see also Hab 3.3.

[27] *Theotokion* 36 (NLR Syr. New Series 11, f. 11r-11v): ܐܝܟ ܕܐ. ܟܬܒ ܐܬܚܙ ܡܝܠܐ ܕܐ ܒܝܕ ܟܬܒ ܐܠܗ.

[28] Ezek 44.1-2: ܬܪܥܐ. ܟܬܒ ܐܬܚܙ ܐܢܐ ܟܬܒ ܐܬܚ ܐܝܟ ܟܬܒ ܐܬ ܐܠ ܒܐ ܐܝܟ (2) ܟܬܒ. ܐܝܟ ܐܠ ܒܐ ܬܪܥ ܐܝܟ ܐܬ

'He willed and sometime came down from heaven to the glorified mountain Sinai to speak with Moses in smoke, mist and tempest, with sounding of horns, and He filled and covered the summit of the mountain'.[31] This passage, which is not a precise quotation, is used here for a more comprehensive interpretation of the image of the 'spiritual mountain' mentioned straight after the passage. With the exception of the word *tnn' (smoke)*, the vocabulary of the *Theotokion* does not correspond to the Peshiṭtā. In particular we find here *rwb' dqrnt'* (lit. 'tumult of horns') instead of *ql' dqrn'* (lit. 'sound of horn') in Ex 19.16, 19.

In the same *Theotokion* 3 we read: 'And upon you, O Virgin, ... in the image of dew upon the fleece He descended, rested and dwelt in You.' The expression 'descended as dew upon the fleece' is an allusion to Judges 6.37-8, and its phraseology corresponds to the Peshiṭtā.[32]

In *Theotokion* 5 of the first mode we find: '...the great King of praise willed and dwelt in you', which is a clear allusion to Ps 24.7-10.[33] It is curious that almost all known manuscripts of the Peshiṭtā translate this image of God as *mlk' d'yqr'* (lit. 'King of glory') which also corresponds to the Septuagint: Ὁ βασιλεύς τῆς δόξης'. The only Syriac variant reading can be found in the undated Melkite Psalter Borgia Syr. 23 in the Vatican Library. Here, as well as in *Theotokion* 5, the expression *mlk' dtšbwḥt'* ('King of praise') is preferred.[34]

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[31] *Theotokion* 3 (NLR Syr. New Series 11, f. 2r): ܗܘ ܕܒ ܝܟ ܚܝ ܚܝ ܕܣܝܢܝ ܪܡܐ ܗܘ ܕܟ ܕܒܗ ܕܒ ܚܝ ܚܝ ܕܣܝܢܝ ܪܡܐ ܗܘ ܕܟ ܕܒܗ ; Ex 19.16: ܚܝ ܚܝ ܕܣܝܢܝ ܪܡܐ ܗܘ ܕܟ ܕܒܗ ... ܚܝ ܚܝ ܕܣܝܢܝ ܪܡܐ ܗܘ ܕܟ ܕܒܗ. *OTP*, part 1, fasc. 1, , p. 162; Ex 19.18-20: ... ܚܝ ܚܝ ܕܣܝܢܝ ܪܡܐ ܗܘ ܕܟ ܕܒܗ (19) ... ܚܝ ܚܝ ܕܣܝܢܝ ܪܡܐ ܗܘ ܕܟ ܕܒܗ (20) ... ܚܝ ܚܝ ܕܣܝܢܝ ܪܡܐ ܗܘ ܕܟ ܕܒܗ *OTP*, part 1, fasc. 1, p. 162.

[32] *Theotokion* 3 (NLR Syr. New Series 11, f. 2v): ... ܚܝ ܚܝ ܕܣܝܢܝ ܪܡܐ ܗܘ ܕܟ ܕܒܗ ; Judges 6.37-8: ... ܚܝ ܚܝ ܕܣܝܢܝ ܪܡܐ ܗܘ ܕܟ ܕܒܗ (38) ... ܚܝ ܚܝ ܕܣܝܢܝ ܪܡܐ ܗܘ ܕܟ ܕܒܗ *OTP*, part 2, fasc. 2, p. 18.

[33] *Theotokion* 3 (NLR Syr. New Series 11, f. 3r): ... ܚܝ ܚܝ ܕܣܝܢܝ ܪܡܐ ܗܘ ܕܟ ܕܒܗ ; Ps 24.7-10: ... ܚܝ ܚܝ ܕܣܝܢܝ ܪܡܐ ܗܘ ܕܟ ܕܒܗ (8) ... ܚܝ ܚܝ ܕܣܝܢܝ ܪܡܐ ܗܘ ܕܟ ܕܒܗ (9) ... ܚܝ ܚܝ ܕܣܝܢܝ ܪܡܐ ܗܘ ܕܟ ܕܒܗ (10) ... ܚܝ ܚܝ ܕܣܝܢܝ ܪܡܐ ܗܘ ܕܟ ܕܒܗ *OTP*, part 2, fasc. 3, p. 24.

[34] Variant reading: (9, 10) ܕܣܝܢܝ ܪܡܐ] ܕܣܝܢܝ ܪܡܐ Vat. Lib. Borgia Syr. 23 (undated). See *OTP*, part 2, fasc. 3, p. 24.

In *Theotokion* 12 *dogmatikon* of the third mode we find a citation from Is 7.14: 'The Virgin conceived and gave birth', which corresponds to the Peshiṭtā.[35] In the *Theotokia* the perfect tense is used in contrast to the participle in the Peshiṭtā and the future tense in the Greek of the Septuagint.[36]

Theotokion 20 of the fourth mode contains the type of 'the tabernacle guarded by Cherubim': 'For nobody is entrusted with the service in the sanctuary of the glorious tabernacle of testimony but Cherubim; they are also slaves of Emmanuel', which is an allusion to the description of the tabernacle in God's commands to Moses in Ex 26.1 ff.[37] We read further: 'He who is raised on the backs of Cherubim and extolled, you hold in your arms…'. Here as well as in *Theotokia* 21, 34 and 45 the motif of the Mother of God being higher than the Cherubim finds its echo. These passages are consonant with the famous hymn attributed to St Cosmas of Maiuma (c. 675–c. 752) 'Τιμιωτέρα τῶν χερουβίμ ...' which is originally the *heirmos* of the ninth ode of the *Triodion* for Good Friday.[38]

In connection with this theme is the Old Testament type of 'the Cherubic chariot' (Ez 1; 10.9) applied to the Virgin Mary, which can be found in *Theotokia* 21 and 34.[39] In the Syriac text two different words from the same root are used for 'chariot', *rkwb'* and *mrkbt'*.

We find one of the most widely used Old Testament types of the Virgin, 'the burning bush', in *Theotokion* 23 of the fourth mode, and

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[35] *Theotokion* 12 (NLR Syr. New Series 11, f. 3r): ܒܬܘܠܬܐ ܕܐܬܝܠܕܬ ܒܒܛܢ ܘܝܠܕܬ ܒܪ ܥܡܢܐܝܠ . Is. 7:14: ܗܐ ܥܠܡܬܐ ܒܒܛܢ ܘܬܝܠܕ ܒܪ OTP, p. III, fasc. 1, 1987, p. 12.

[36] Is 7.14: ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ λήψεται, καὶ τέξεται υἱόν ... Septuaginta, vol. II, p. 575.

[37] *Theotokion* 20 (NLR Syr. New Series 11, f. 6v): ܠܡܕܒ ܒܝܬ ܩܕܫ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܠܐ ܡܫܬܠܡ ܐܠܐ ܟܪܘܒܐ ܐܦ ܥܒܕܝ ܥܡܢܐܝܠ ... ; Ex 26.1: ܘܐܢܬ ܕܪܟܒ ܥܠ ܟܪܘܒܐ ܒܝܕܝܟ ... *OTP*, part 1, fasc. 1, p. 176.

[38] M. Scaballanovich, *Tolkoviy Typicon*, Kiev, 1913 (repr. Moscow, 1995), fasc. 2, p. 290; Lash, 'Mary in Eastern Church literature', p. 75.

[39] *Theotokion* 21 (NLR Syr. New Series 11, f. 7r): ܕܡܪܟܒ ܒܟܪܘܒ *Theotokion* 34 (NLR Syr. New Series 11, f. 10v): ; Ezek 10.9: ... *OTP*, part 3, fasc. 3, p. 17.

[40] *Theotokion* 23 (NLR Syr. New Series 11, f. 8r): ; *Theotokion* 36 (NLR Syr. New Series 11, f. 11v): ; *Theotokion* 48 (NLR Syr. New Series 11, f. 15r):

in *Theotokia* 36 and 48. This is an allusion to Ex 3.2.[40] In *theotokion* 36 the verb *yqd* ('to be burnt up') is used in accordance with the Peshiṭtā, while the verb *'ṯḥrk* ('to be singed') is used in *Theotokion* 23, and the verb *'štlhb* ('to be inflamed') is in *Theotokion* 48. In the St Petersburg collection of *Theotokia*, the vocabulary of one type of the Virgin is different, although these three verbs are synonyms.

In *Theotokion* 22 of the fourth mode one can find other types of the Mother of God. 'Holy vessel' here is probably an allusion to Ex 24.6 and even more to Heb 9.21.[41] The word *lm'ny*, common in both the *Theotokia* and the Peshiṭtā, is used in our hymn in the plural, following the pattern of Heb 9.21, with the meaning of 'holy vessels of heaven'.

The 'spiritual altar of faith' is probably an allusion to Ex 25.23 and Ps 22.5 where the same Syriac word *ptwr'* is used.[42]

Theotokion 34 of the sixth mode and *Theotokion* 48 of the eighth mode, being small collections of Old Testament typology, in addition to some of the types mentioned above, contain the image of 'the throne of glory of the great King', which may have its prototypes in Is 6.1, Ez 10.1 and Ps 11.4.[43] It is curious that in *Theotokia* 34 and 36 the Syriac transcription *trwnws* of the Greek θρόνος occurs, while in *Theotokion* 48 as well as in the Bible we find the Syriac word *kwrsy'*. This word, in its turn, corresponds to θρόνος in the Septuagint.

The 'jar of pure gold' here is probably an allusion to Ex 16.33, although different words are used in the *Theotokia* and in the

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Ex 3.2: ܘܚܙܐ ܡܫܐ ܕܢܘܪܐ ܒܓܘ ܣܢܐ ܠܐ ܐܟܠ ܗܘܐ ܘܐܡܪ ܐܐܬܪ ܩܕܫ ܗܘ ܕܐܬܪ ܠܐ ܢܬܩܪܒ ܒܗ ܐܢܫ ܐܠܐ ܟܗܢܐ *OTP*, part 1, fasc. 1, p. 120-1.

[41] *Theotokion* 22 (NLR Syr. New Series 11, fol. 7v): ܕܡܫܟܢܐ ,ܩ ܕܒܪܙܐ[ܐ] ,ܡܟܠ. ; Ex 24.6: ܘܠܩܚ ,ܕܡܐ ܘܪܩ ܕܐܬܪ ܠܡܕܒܚ ܐܫܬ *OTP*, part 1, fasc. 1, p. 173; Heb 9.21: ܘܟܠ ܐܢܝܐ ܕܒܝܬ ܠܡܕܒܚ.

[42] *Theotokion* 22 (NLR Syr. New Series 11, f. 7v): ܟܠ ܕܒܝܬ ܡܫܟܢܗ ܕܐܠܗܐ (…); Ex 25.23: ܘܥܒܕܬ ܐܫܬ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܚܘ *OTP*, part 1, fasc. 1, p. 175; Ps 22.5: ܒܟܘ ,ܕܒܛܚܘ ܠܟ ܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܒܘܗܝ *OTP*, part 2, fasc. 3, p. 23.

[43] *Theotokion* 34 (NLR Syr. New Series 11, fol. 10v): ܩܕܝܫ ,ܒܢ ,ܒܪܡܝܢ ܕܟ ܡܠܟ[ܐ] ܡܫܡܫܢܐ ; *Theotokion* 36 (NLR Syr. New Series 11, fol. 11v): ܩܕܝܫ ܕܐܬ ܒܪܡܝܢ ; *Theotokion* 48 (NLR Syr. New Series 11, f. 15r): ܡܫ[ܐ] [ܠܟ] ܥܠ Is 6.1:ܘܐܡܪ ܠܟ ,ܡܠܐܟܐ ܕܥܠ ܡܢ ܕܐܬ ܠܐ ܒܐ ܕܐܬ ܠܡ ܐܬ ܕܐ ܕܐ *OTP*, part 3, fasc. 1, p. 8; Ezek 10.1: ܘܒܪܙܐ ܕܐܝ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܝܬ ܒܐ ܕܐ ܠܡ ܐܠܗ ܕܐ ܕܐ ܕܐ

Peshiṭtā for 'jar': *qwlt'* and *qsṭ'* ('pot') respectively.[44]

Finally, the 'rod which blossomed and grew' (ibid.) is the rod of Aaron in Num 17.5 and 8.[45] Here we have possible evidence of penetration of apocryphal elements into Byzantine hymnography, since the 'rod' mentioned may be also an allusion to the rod of Joseph in the Protoevangelion of James.

There are also some New Testament allusions and citations in the Syriac *Theotokia*. For example the description of the lamp, the tabernacle, the ark, the golden jar and the rod of Aaron given in the commands to Moses (Ex 25, 26, 37, 40 etc.) are mentioned in Heb 9.2-5. The vocabulary of the New Testament Peshiṭtā corresponds here to that of the Old Testament. The *Theotokia* also contain a New Testament typology of Christ and the Virgin Mary: 'the Lamb of God' (*Theotokion* 1; Rev 5.6 ff.), God the Word incarnate (*Theotokia* 3, 6, 17, 21, 29, 35, 40, 43, 46,48; Jn 1.1 ff.), the Bridegroom (*Theotokion* 34; Jn 3.29, Matt 9.15), the Bride (*Theotokia* 28, 51; Song of Songs 4.8, Jn 3.29); 'the true vine of life that bore and gave birth to the life-giving fruit' (*Theotokion* 37; Jn 15.1-2).

Among the New Testament quotations should be highlighted the quotation from Luke 1:48: 'all generations will call You blessed' found in *Theotokion* 13 of the third mode. Comparison of three different Syriac translations of Luke's Gospel reveals that the translation in the *Theotokia* is closer to the *Syrus Sinaiticus* (or the *Vetus Syra*), the oldest version of the Syriac Gospels preserved in the late fourth-century palimpsest Sin. Syr. 30 than to the Peshiṭtā.[46]

I have considered here only some individual instances of the use of the Biblical text in Melkite Syriac hymnography. They show that in

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[44] *Theotokion* 48 (NLR Syr. New Series 11, f. 15r): ܥܠܡ ܠܗ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܫܒܚ ܕܫܒܚ ; Ex 16.33: ܗܒ ܡܫܐ ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܠܐ ܒܗ ܡܢ ܡܢܐ ܕܢܬܩܝܡ ܠܕܪܟܐ *OTP*, part 1, fasc. 1, p. 156.

[45] *Theotokion* 48 (NLR Syr. New Series 11, f. 15r): ܥܠܡ ܠܗ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܦ ܐܝܬ ; Num 17.5: ܗܘ ܕܒܚܪܬܝ ܐܢܫ ; Num 17.8: ܐܦ ܕܐܫ ܕܐܬ ܠܒܝܬ ܠܐܗܪܘܢ ܕܦܪܚ (Num 17.20, 23) *OTP*, part 1, fasc. 2, p. 56.

[46] *Theotokion* 13 (NLR Syr. New Series 11, f. 5r): ܕܟܠ ܠ ܕܡ ܕܒܪ ܡܠܐ. Luke 1:48: S ܕܟܠ ܥܡܐ ܕܐܬܝ ܐܢ (Sinaiticus Syrus); P ܟܠ ܕܟܠ ܕܒܪ ܥܡܐ (*Peshiṭṭā*); H ܟܠ ܕܟܠ ܕܐܬܝ (Harklean version) (G.A. Kiraz, *Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels: Aligning the Sinaiticus, Curetonianus, Peshiṭtā and Harklean Versions*, Leiden, 1996, vol. III, p. 16. Cf. Malachi 3.12: ܘܢܗܘܘ ܐܪܥܐ ܚܦܝܨܐ *OTP*, part 3, fasc. 4, pp. 98-9.

the *Theotokia* collection of the National Library of Russia more than twenty allusions to the Old and New Testaments are to be found. The vocabulary and phraseology of these often follow the Peshiṭtā translation of the Bible, though from time to time the translators preferred to transcribe the words from the original Greek text of the hymns or even from the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament than to use the traditional Syriac vocabulary of the Peshiṭtā.

When quoting from the Bible (in the *Theotokia* there are no more than five direct quotations) the ninth-century translators of these *Theotokia* did not aim to use exact quotations from the existing Syriac versions of the Bible, the most common of which was the Peshiṭtā as far as the Old Testament is concerned. For the New Testament, some quotations are closer to other Syriac translations, in particular the *Syrus Sinaiticus*, than to the Peshiṭtā. The translators' main purpose was to give as powerful an expression of the biblical images as possible. This often involved making changes to both the original Greek text of the *Theotokia* and the text of the Holy Scriptures.

The Melkite hymns examined here are not alone in their wide use of biblical typologies of the Mother of God. It is also very common in Syriac and Greek hymnography and homiletics from the fifth century onwards. This article is just one part of a wider comparative study of parallel development of literature devoted to the Mother of God in Greek, Syriac, Coptic and Arabic traditions, their possible interactions and mutual influences.

Theotokia *translated from the St Petersburg manuscript*

…we write *Theotokia*, firstly the [first] mode

1. Hail to you, Virgin, the most holy of us all, the Mother of God,[47] the abode of humility in which every creature finds life. [Hail] to you, an unquenchable lamp, the receptacle of the fair and inconceivable One, temple glorified and indestructible. Hail to you, for the Lamb of God who accepted the sin and impiety of the world was born from you.

2. In your conception and birth, O Holy Virgin Mother of God, all

[47] *yldt 'lh'*, Θεοτόκος (lit. 'God-bearer'), translated as Mother of God.

the prophecies of the righteous God-clad men find their limit and completion. David the forefather named you the ark, O Holy One, for the rod came forth and a branch grew out of the root of Jesse as it is written in Isaiah. You showed forth the spiritual mountain, as Daniel depicted [it]. Besides, Ezekiel miraculously saw you in the image of a shut and illuminated gate. For the great sun of righteousness, the Christ, rose from you and enlightened the believers, and His is the abundant grace.

3. To the Mother of God and Virgin all of you, O tribes of the earth, bring honour and veneration, because from the confines of her holy womb God the Word was born, who is her son. He made her become the one who she is from the one who she was not. He willed and sometime came down from heaven to the glorified Mount Sinai to speak with Moses in smoke, mist and tempest, with sounding of horns, and He filled and covered the summit of the mountain. And upon you, O Virgin, spiritual mountain, in the image of dew upon the fleece He descended, rested and dwelt in you. Truly blessed is your holy womb, which bore the incarnate God the Word. Therefore pray to Him with us saying: You, who willed and came into the world, but did not remove and detach yourself from the Father, Glory to You, who can do everything You will, and the Lover of mankind.

4. Hail to you, Mother of God, the Virgin, for you have borne us the King of kings, the Christ who is Enlightener, Redeemer,[48] and Saviour of our souls.

5. Hail to you, O Virgin full of grace, Mother of Christ, because the great King of praise willed and dwelt in you. He came and sanctified [you], and the living and Holy Spirit descended upon you, and used to be with you freely. Offer Him supplications for our salvation.

Second mode

6. Hail to you, most pure Virgin, for you gave birth to the incarnate Word. Beseech for us with your supplication and pray for the salvation of our souls.

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[48] The verb *šwzb* (lit. 'deliver') in some cases is translated as 'redeem'.

7. Who will not proclaim you blessed, pure and holy Virgin! Who will not magnify and worship the One who was born from you without intercourse, who has shone from the pre-eternal Father and came to us, the only-begotten Son, who was incarnate and was born inexplicably from your pure womb? Being God by His nature, He truly became man for the sake of love towards us; not being divided into two persons, but in two natures in their unity without conjunction worshiped and glorified. And therefore pray and supplicate, O humble one and full of grace, for the salvation of our souls.

8. It is you that we magnify, Mother of God, Virgin; and it is you that we laud, O one filled with every blessing and joy. You are the haven from all our afflictions, and from your hand all the diseased are healed. Supplicate, O most glorified one, Him who was born from you to give rest and peace to our souls.

9. Hail to you—every creature shouts to you. Hail to you, Mother of God, Virgin. Hail to you, pure Mary. Hail to you, the one who contained in her womb the Creator of all the creatures. Hail to you, gate of heaven. Hail to you, the armaments of David the prophet. Hail to you, shining jewel of all jewels. Hail to you, joy of all. Hail to you, salvation of the people. Hail to you, intercessor and refuge of our souls.

10. All of us divinely accept you as the Mother of God and rightly proclaim you blessed, for you are the ornament of the Holy Church, O pure one. You alone bore in your womb the One who is God the Most High, and at the same time He is man, to whom you gave birth, all-pure Mary. That is why we call out, raising our voices together with the incorporeal angels: glory to your virtue, O one full of grace!

Third mode

11. Pure Mother of Christ, you are the only blessed one. Save and deliver from all diseases and sufferings those who take refuge in you.

12. Great is this wonder: the Virgin conceived and gave birth. And the One who was born is pre-eternal God. His birth and coming from the perfect nature are revealed and are visible. O great and amazing mystery, which remains inexplicable even being expressed;

visible to the eyes, it is incomprehensible and inaccessible to cognition. Blessed are you, undefiled Maiden. Being daughter of earthly Adam, you became and are named Mother of God the Most High. Supplicate Him to grant abundant grace to the world.

13. [Hail to you], place which received God, Virgin, the only one without intercourse. Through her the unattainable light rose and shone for us. All generations call her blessed, raising voices: Hail to you, O humble one! Hail to you, O pure one! Hail to you, who brought eternal life to our kind!

14. You have boundlessly enlightened the world, the only blessed one, as you gave birth to Christ the Saviour. Hail to you, Mother of God, Virgin.

15. Without seed, you received in your womb from the most-Holy Spirit. Therefore we glorify you, saying: Hail to you, most-holy Virgin.

16. You who are filled with every goodness, beseech and pray for us, truly your servants, to the One who was born from your womb, to purify us from all iniquities that we have committed and to keep us henceforth from committing anything that contains ruin. Our Lady, do not reject us.

17. Above nature you conceived, O Virgin and pure Mother, and above reason you bore miraculously God the Word who is not [contained] within the world's limits. Therefore, at every moment we call to you, O entirely unblemished one: Save us, your servants.

18. Who can describe the birth you gave, which is supernatural, O Mother of Christ, God? Since it was through you, pure one, that God has liberated and saved us people from the curse. And let Him save those who call [to Him]: My Deliverer, Glory to You!

Fourth mode

19. Save and deliver us from all sufferings which surround us, Mother of Christ, God. You have borne us the Saviour of the whole world. Therefore, we all call to you: Hail to you, holy one and full of grace.

20. How shall we glorify you, Mother of God, the root of all glory? How shall we magnify and venerate you? For being the pure Virgin, you were not polluted as mothers are; and having endured the

miraculous birth, you have preserved the purity of your undefiled body. Who will be able to express truly your mystery, which is the most concealed and exalted of [all] miracles? Embarrassed and humbled is now all the vain haughtiness of the Jews. For who is entrusted with the service in the sanctuary of the glorious tabernacle of testimony if not the Cherubim, though they are also servants of Emmanuel? And you are the Virgin full of beauty, and Mother of the Saviour of us all who is raised on the backs of the Cherubim and glorified. You held Him in your arms when he was feeding on the milk of your breast. Ask Him before whom you have confidence, and pray [to Him], O most-holy one, that He may grant our souls every repose and abundant grace.

21. Hail to you, animated temple of God the Word, truly Virgin full of grace. Hail to you, ewe intelligent and blessed. For from you the Creator of all came to the world, having clothed Himself with flesh. Hail to you, adorned chariot of the earth, and likewise height of the sky. It is through you that the power of the Trinity that sanctifies all is revealed. How [shall we] proclaim you blessed, Mother without a husband? How [shall we] glorify you, for you are truly the mother of Emmanuel, at whom even the Cherubim dare not look. As for you, you inexplicably contained and bore Him within your pure womb. Pray to Him and ask, O unblemished one, for the salvation of the souls of us all.

22. Hail to you, O chosen one, selected to be the holy vessel[49] of heaven. Hail to you, spiritual altar of faith. Hail to you, fount in which the Father, the only-begotten Son and the living and Holy Spirit [abide] for the joy of people (...) Hail to you, O humble one, for you have cleansed and washed our conscience from all the defilement of shameful passions and enlightened our minds. Therefore, we call to you: Hail to you, O one full of grace, the Lord is with you!

23. You are the spiritual ark and the burning bush.[50] Mother of Christ, blessed now, raise your prayer to Him for all of us. Naming you Mother of God and taking refuge in your mercy,[51] we sinners are saved.

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[49] Lit. 'vessels'.
[50] Lit. 'unburned', 'unsinged'.
[51] Another possible meaning is: 'to your womb'.

24. Since you are exalted among all living beings, we do not even dare to praise you, Mother of God, but we pray to you: Justify us freely and have mercy upon us.

25. Holy and blessed Virgin, Mary ever full of grace, Mother of God! [You are] the new heaven and the new earth, workshop of the universal salvation,[52] treasury of all heavenly good things, sanctuary of all humility, firm establishment of orthodox people. You are the haven and redemption of all who seek refuge in you. We cry out to you, saying: O limit of mysteries, types and symbols of Christ the God, pray and supplicate for the salvation of our souls.

26. Offer supplications for our salvation, O pure one and full of grace, to God who was born from you, for He willed, and by His grace He put on flesh in order to free and deliver us who praise you.

Fifth mode

27. Under the cover[53] of you mercy we find protection of your mercy, Mother of God, and we offer our supplication to you: Do not reject the prayer of your servants, but deliver us from every suffering, as you are the only pure and blessed one.

28. From your womb, O Virgin flawless and pure, humble Bride of God, in these last times the pre-eternal Son of God the Father was born when He willed, and has truly put on flesh. Therefore, all the choirs and ranks of lofty angels magnify you, offering praise together with us, sons of your race…and extol your humility, Mother of God, blessed Virgin.

29. O pure Virgin. We do believe that she who bore the incarnate Word of life, miraculously remained Virgin after the birth; and carrying Him, as an infant, in her arms, she besought Him on behalf of all the living. Praising her, we call out: Hail to you, humble one and full of grace.

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[52] Here and in *Theotokion* 51 *byt t'gwrt'* literally means 'market' or 'fair'. The translation 'workshop' is based on the meaning of ἐργασία given in R. Payne Smith, ed., *Thesaurus Syriacus*, Oxford, 1901, vol. II, col. 4389.

[53] Lit. 'wing'.

30. Mother full of grace, plead for us by voicing your prayer and beseech [your Son], as you are exalted, to grant our souls [His] great mercy and also forgiveness for the great multitude of offences that we have committed, we pray to You.

31. We take refuge now under the cover of your prayer, where all of us diseased clothe ourselves in force and might. Therefore, we call to you: Hail to you, the great bridge leading and transferring from death to life those who truly confess you to be Virgin and Mother of God.

32. O pure Virgin, Mother of God, full of grace! You have borne Light, Life and Repose for the world, since for us, the Orthodox, you are a calm haven, healing and succour, and we take refuge in you, having been delivered from temptations. O humble one, full of every fairness, union of all good things, source of blessings, consummation of all mysteries and symbols! Pray, beseech and supplicate for the salvation of our souls.

Sixth mode

33. We glorify God who was incarnate from you, Mother of God, Virgin. Supplicate and pray to Him for the salvation of the souls of all of us.

34. Mystically we glorify you, Mary, Mother of God, because you have appeared as the throne of glory of the great King, the most-holy tabernacle wider than the heavens, the chariot of Cherubim, the one higher than all the Seraphim. For the glorious Bridegroom, our God, was born from you as He was incarnated. Supplicate and pray to Him for the salvation of the souls of all of us.

35. It is proper and right truly to call you blessed, Mother of God. The Word, Creator of all, came to your undefiled womb. He willed and He became flesh without changing by His nature. His providence was inaccessible to cognition, but the flesh that He has assumed from you is completely animated and intelligent. Remaining in it and establishing Himself, He assumed it and took possession of it. According to His hypostasis He was one [and the same]. Therefore, we who believe in Christ confess piously two natures in a single Word, as a sign of alteration. But by this we do not make union in a mixture and confusion and do not speak about division [leading to an] alteration in nature. Pray and supplicate to Him,

O Virgin pure and holy, that He may send down to us repose and abundant grace by His mercy.

36. Who but you was sometime previously shown symbolically by Daniel, when from your mountain, Pure one, the stone was hewn, which is Christ, our God; and by Ezekiel who saw [you] in the image of the throne of fire; and Moses when he saw you on Mount Sinai as the burning bush.

37. Mother of God, Virgin, you are the true vine of life that carried and bore fruit, the Giver of life. We bring you our supplication: pray and beseech, O glorified one, with the choir of the Apostles, for the deliverance of our souls.

Seventh mode

38. After the birth which you gave we name you pure and holy Virgin, as you conceived the Lord of all without intercourse. Pray to Him and supplicate for the salvation of the souls of all of us.

39. Mother of God, you are called Mother above nature, you have remained and stayed a Virgin beyond word and thought. The tongue does not have the power to explain the miracle of your glorious birth. Therefore, O pure one, our race is delighted by your conception. The way of your marvellous birth is incomprehensible. For as God willed, the order of nature submitted to Him, and because of that we all name you Mother of God and pray to you incessantly: Pray and beseech for the salvation of our souls.

40. We give praise to you, Mother of God, worthy of exaltation, because you are the only one among women who remained Virgin after birth and you have borne God the Word, and have become for Him [both] mother and servant. Therefore, we say together with Gabriel: Peace be with you. Hail to you, O one full of grace. Supplicate to the One born from you that He may deliver from the curse the souls of all of us.

41. Pure Virgin, unblemished Mother of God, by your supplication deliver and free [us] from temptations. We exalt you at every moment.

42. Hail to you, peace be with you, holy Mary. Mother without a husband, Virgin Mother of God. For you are the triumph of the Orthodox and the helper of those who are in danger. Pray to

Christ who has shone from you and beseech for the pacification of the world by His mercy and for the salvation and redemption of our souls.

43. You, the only one, contained the infinite One, and miraculously bore the incarnate God, the Word. Hail to you, O husbandless one.

Eighth mode

44. All praise is proper to the Mother of God and … to the humble one delightfulness of the wreath of lauds. He who dwelled always with His Father made her become everything she is from what she was not. And He was born from her by His mercy and was an infant by His will, the One who was from the ages. He kept her virginity unspoiled and showed her as the Mother of God to all. Having audacity [to Him], she is praying to her Son for the world and for our souls.

45. Hail to you, Mother and Servant of Him who is our Saviour. When we utter your name, we name you the Heaven, for you contained Him who cannot be contained. The Cherubim praise you, for you were bearing the Light which illuminates us, and the fire which was lit up but did not burn your holy womb, O perfect one. He who came from her by the flesh has become flesh and remained among us, as John testified. Merciful Lord of all, glory to You!

46. [You] who are more glorious than the highest powers and who have borne for us the Lord Word incarnate, beseech, O Mother of God, for the salvation of our souls.

47. To Her the Archangel Gabriel with the Good News called out, saying: Hail to you, Mother and Virgin, for you have borne the Creator of all and our Lord!

48. Intelligible Word ... ancient burning bush. Hail to you, jar of pure gold. Hail to you, flower of the faith. Hail to you, rod which blossomed and grew. Hail to you, for you are ... and the pearl. Hail to you, mountain of God ... you have performed. Hail to you ...release of life. Hail to You, throne of the Lord. O glorified one...

49. ...Mother of God, deliver and save us from various temptations those who have recourse to you with faith.

50. Hail to you, O one full of grace, gladness and rejoicing of angels. Hail to you, Mother of God, the message of all the prophets. Hail to you, blessed Virgin, our God the Lord is with You.

51. Hail to you, magnificent workshop of Christ,[54] who is elevated above all. Hail to you,... Mary the Bride. Hail to You, ... gladness and adornment of the Orthodox ... Beseech [Him] and pray to Him born from you for ... and redemption of our race.

[54] See note to *Theotokion* 25.

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